

WOMEN'S MINISTRY



in the **21st**
century

The Encyclopedia
of Practical Ideas

Easy-to-copy reproducible
materials included.

women's
MINISTRY



in the 21st century



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Women's Ministry in the 21st Century

The Encyclopedia of Practical Ideas

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introduction



Welcome to *Women's Ministry in the 21st Century: The Encyclopedia of Practical Ideas!*

We believe that God passionately loves women and has a wonderful purpose in mind for them. Women are strong, resourceful, passionate, and loving. When women give themselves completely to God's service, watch out, 'cause amazing things are going to happen!

The ideas in this book will help you guide the women in your church to love God with their whole heart; to love their sisters in Christ with a pure, strong love; and to zealously serve the church and the world around them with a sweet, self-sacrificing spirit.

Within these pages, you'll find dozens and dozens of fantastic ideas that you can use with the women in your church today. These ideas are practical, hands-on, and experiential. Whether you need a devotion for your holiday banquet or a service project for your young mom's group, this book has it.

We pray that the women in your church will reap eternal benefits from the ideas in this book. May God bless you and your ministry in his name.

section **one**



friendship



AND FUN

Women love to have fun! It almost goes without saying that all of the activities you plan for women need to be enjoyable. But fun does have a deeper purpose.

In today's culture, women long for connection with others. Women are often desperately lonely. People move more frequently than they did a generation ago, and it takes a long time to rebuild satisfying friendships after a move. Their families may live far away, and neighbors don't get to know one another the way they once did.

Those who work outside the home may have acquaintances at work, but these relationships are not often deep, abiding friendships. Since these women frequently spend their "free time" meeting the needs of their families and catching up on household chores, they don't have much time to build friendships. And women who work from their homes often feel isolated from others and unsure of how to make new friends.

It's God's plan that the church be built on relationships and

community. The Bible says more than once that we are the body of Christ—we are all connected. We are family. In fact, the Bible goes so far as to say that we belong to one another. Unfortunately, this kind of close bond is not the experience of many people at church. Consider your own church. How many people come to your church, attend the worship service, and then leave the church building without ever speaking to anyone, other than to say “good morning” to the greeter at the door? People can (and do!) attend a church for decades without ever being invited into true community. This shouldn't be the case!

Think what our churches would be like if people were truly loved and cared for from the moment they entered the door. How would our churches be different if people welcomed one another into their lives and their homes? How would the community react if Christians really were known by their love for one another?

We know that you, as a women's ministry director, long to connect women to God. But this happens best when women also build deep, lasting ties with other women in the church and discover a sense of belonging in the church. Women need to learn to support one another and to draw support from other Christian women. They need to learn to bear one another's burdens and to love one another with Christ's love. It's your role to help women in your church discover how we are mysteriously and wonderfully interconnected and interdependent. This means developing opportunities for women to be with one another for no other purpose than to laugh, to learn about one another, and to make friends.

Even though technology helps us stay more connected than ever before, people still feel very alone. As crazy as it sounds, many have forgotten how to make friends. They often need to be guided through the process of sharing, talking, and becoming vulnerable to others. That's why these activities are so important. They give women opportunities for connections that they may not know how to create on their own.

Of course, your ministry can't end here. It needs to provide balance. If all your programs are just for fun, women will miss out on the chance to grow in faith. On the other hand, if all your programs emphasize learning, the women in your church will be lacking in love.

Read these activities carefully. Let this information percolate in your mind over several days, and be open to God's leading. Use these activities as they are, or let them spark your imagination. Most important, though, have fun, love one another, and draw other women to Christ and the church through sincere love and friendship.

IDEA 1

welcoming ideas



Do whatever it takes to ensure that women are welcomed into your group and that they have opportunities to form deep, lasting friendships. Here are some ideas.

- **Form a welcoming committee.** Find friendly people to greet women at the door, to explain what the agenda is for the day, and to chat with people before the event gets started.
- **Introduce the leaders.** Make sure that each woman who addresses the group introduces herself and tells the whole group about her role in the women's ministry. Don't assume that everyone knows who the leaders are.
- **Provide clear, complete information about your women's ministry programs.** It's easy to come up with catchy titles for programs and neglect to explain what those programs are for, when they meet, where they meet, and how long meetings last. Don't assume that everyone knows, for example, that all regular Bible studies take a break during the month of December—be very clear about the details. Provide information through handouts, on your church website, and on your ministry social networking pages.
- **Create a friend-making team.** Do more than just greet women at the door. Form a team of friendly women to purposefully look for women they don't know and engage them in warm conversation. It won't matter if women on the friend-making team end up talking to women who have been coming to your church for months or years. The friend-making team will serve two purposes: It will help to get women connected in real friendships, and it will encourage women to move outside their regular group of friends. For the women on this friend-making team, connecting with women they don't know should take precedence over chatting with their old friends.

- **Don't expect too much right away.** It can be easy to ask new people to bare their souls and sign away their lives to the women's ministry, but that can scare people away, especially those who are new to church. Be friendly, warm, and accepting. Offer sincere friendship. Offer as much information as you can about your programs. But also respect people's privacy by allowing them to ease into programs as they feel comfortable.

- **Provide many entry points for service.** The women who feel most connected to others are often the women who volunteer to help plan and serve. Allow plenty of opportunities for women to get involved.

- **Watch out for cliques.** This isn't just a problem with junior high girls. It's natural for women to form closer friendships with some women than with others. This only becomes a problem if a group of friends begins to exclude others. If you notice that the same women always sit together and that other women always sit alone, come up with a plan to shake up the seating and help women interact with new people.

- **Don't just watch the numbers.** It's easy to assume that well-attended programs are successful. But it may be that women come to event after event without ever truly connecting with another human being. Provide discussion time at every event, and encourage women to chat in pairs or trios to help them get to know one another. Also be sure to have a balance of large-group opportunities and small-group opportunities. Always try to help women deepen their connections to the group by getting involved with a smaller group of women that meets regularly.

IDEA 2

weeknight brown-bag meal



Invite the women in your church to a once-a-week brown-bag meal. Each woman should pack her own dinner (or bring take out) and come to the church or someone's home for a time of getting to know each other and discussion. If possible, plan for child care so that moms can attend.

Plan a topic of discussion for each meeting. You might plan some weeks around general topics of interest such as parenting, finding good bargains at the grocery store, or new fitness tips.

Other weeks you can pose a question related to spiritual growth, such as "How do I make prayer a part of my daily life?" or "What does it mean to be a person of grace?"

Allow time for women to eat and enjoy the company of others. Then introduce the topic of conversation. You may also want to plan a short devotion or a time of worship.

These meetings will provide an ideal setting for making new friends. The brown-bag meals will also help women form networks that can help them find jobs, share rides, and find Christian support and accountability. And brown-bag meals provide a great opportunity for women to invite other women (neighbors, co-workers, sisters) to a nonthreatening church activity.

IDEA 3

bike clinic

Encourage the women in your church to come to a bike clinic. Invite local bike mechanics to give simple maintenance tips, including how to do a tune-up and how to fix a flat tire. Arrange for the mechanics to help women "size" their bikes and adjust handlebars and seats for a better fit and a more comfortable ride.

Provide table displays with information about biking gear and clothing, local bike paths, and biking-to-work opportunities.

Before the event, encourage women to donate used bikes to be given away to other women at the event. Women can also use this event to pass along no-longer-needed baby seats and helmets to other women. Be sure that the bike mechanics inspect the seats and the helmets for safety. A helmet that's sustained an impact in a crash should not be handed on.

While women use this time to get to know others who enjoy cycling, take advantage of the opportunity to plan several rides in your area. Encourage the cyclists to meet at least once a month to enjoy fellowship and ride together.



IDEA 4

birthday limousine

Treat women like VIPs. It's a great way to thank women who've been faithful servants in your women's ministry program or to encourage women by providing a little bit of extra pampering.



Once a month, have a limousine pick up the women who celebrate birthdays during that month and deliver them to your regular women's meeting in style. Call all of the women a week in advance to confirm their intention to attend the event. Then, on the day of the event, have the limousine pick up each woman either at her home or place of business.

On occasion, friends of the birthday woman might enjoy "dressing to the nines" and renting the limo for additional time so they can take her out for a fabulous meal—at a favorite fast-food restaurant!

One side benefit of this VIP treatment is the "advertising" your women's ministry program will get. Neighbors and co-workers are sure to ask the birthday women about the limousine, and their questions would lead naturally to a conversation about how much fun your church's women's ministry is.

IDEA 5

overnight getaways



Plan times for small groups of women (four to ten) to go on short getaways. If you live near a popular vacation destination, an overnight trip can be very affordable if four women can share a room and get away on short notice. In the winter, plan to snowshoe, sled, or skate during the day and spend the evenings sharing life stories while soaking in the hot tub. In the summer, hike, swim, or laze on the beach. Trips can be planned for one or two nights, depending on schedules. Make the trips easy on the budget by planning simple meals that can be heated in a microwave or by eating in the hotel's dining room.

IDEA 6

craft group



Begin a weekly craft group for women who enjoy making things with their hands. For suitable craft ideas, look in magazines, peruse fabric or hobby stores, or do an online search.

The women might come together at the church or at someone's home to work on their crafts. They may want to chat while they work, or they may choose to listen to music while they work.

Another idea is to listen to one woman as she reads the Bible or another book aloud during the work time.

The women might make crafts for themselves, or they may choose to make crafts to use to cheer up people in a nursing home or retirement facility. For example, one group created place cards and table decorations for holiday celebrations and other monthly celebrations at a local nursing home.

IDEA 7

praise and exercise

Encourage women to get together once a week for praise and exercise. Gather a variety of exercise CDs and DVDs that use Christian music. Turn up the volume, and enjoy exercising together.

Choose a rotating team of facilitators, and suggest that whoever facilitates chooses the exercise that week. Encourage women to drop in whenever they can. You may want to plan the meeting early in the morning so that women with jobs can join and still get to work on time. Work-at-home women can linger for a fruit and coffee breakfast. Or plan the exercise time for late morning or for a lunch hour.



IDEA 8

prayer walks

Find a peaceful walking path in your town; many towns have walking paths along rivers. Invite small groups of women to gather to walk and pray together. You'll want to schedule at least two weekly walking times. For example, you might want to provide an early morning time and a lunch hour time. Encourage the groups to stay small. It's best if women walk and pray in groups of no more than three or four. Encourage the women to pray for one another, for the community, and for the world.



IDEA 9

community progressive dinner

To create more unity in your community, plan a progressive dinner with the other women's ministries in your area. You'll need the



participation of at least two other churches, and you'll need to start planning a couple of months in advance. The number of churches will determine how many courses you serve. Possible courses are appetizers, soup, salad, main course, and dessert. Each church should serve its course at its church building.

During your planning meeting, pick a date, choose a menu, decide which church will serve which course, and plan a short devotional to be shared during the dessert course (see pages 73-79 for ideas). You'll also want to plan fun getting-to-know-you questions (see the ideas below) for the women to discuss during each course.

Start advertising your event, and take reservations. Each church can absorb the cost of its course, so you need not charge a fee, though you may want to make arrangements for the other churches to chip in a bit for the church that provides the main course, as that tends to be more expensive.

Be sure to use disposable plates, cups, and flatware for this event to minimize cleanup. Encourage each church to decorate its tables creatively. At the first course, arrange the seating so that the women will be sitting next to women from other churches. Ask God's blessing for the evening, and thank him for the food. Have the women discuss one of the getting-to-know-you questions while they eat.

Then have everyone continue on to the next church for the next course. Have the women sit with different people from the other churches for the second course, and have them discuss another one of the getting-to-know-you questions while they eat. Continue doing this at each church. End the evening with a short devotion and a closing prayer. Encourage the women to continue getting to know the women they met at this event.

IDEA 10

getting-to-know-you questions



- As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- What was your favorite meal when you were a child?
- What would people be surprised to find out about you?
- How would you describe the perfect life?
- Did you plan your wedding when you were a child? What was it like?

- What was your favorite music group when you were a teenager?
Do you still listen to the group?
- What's the perfect vacation? Have you ever experienced one?
- What do you think God looks like?
- Would you rather read books or magazines? What's your favorite thing to read?
- What was your biggest flop in the kitchen?
- How many pairs of shoes do you own? Is that number enough?
- How many times in your life have you moved?
- What part of the newspaper do you read first? Why?
- Which meal do you like best: breakfast, lunch, or dinner?
- How many siblings do you have? Where are they now?
- What brought you to this church? How long have you been here?
- What's your favorite outfit? Why?
- Have you kept up with your high school or college friends? Why or why not?
- What's your favorite way to spend a weekend?
- Are your photos neatly organized or all in a pile?

IDEA 11

ice-cream sundae

Devote one event completely to ice cream. Serve a gigantic ice-cream sundae feast! Set out buckets of ice cream on long tables, and then set out all of the toppings you can think of.

Set up small tables around the room, and place a few discussion-starter questions at each table to help the women get to know one another. It's a good idea to encourage women to sit and chat with someone they don't already know.

This is an easy event for women to bring friends to.



IDEA 12

jammin'

Form groups of women who like to sing or play instruments. The groups can get together just for fun—to play music together and worship God. Or the groups can play music for the women's ministry events at your church. The groups can also provide music at local nursing homes, retirement centers, preschools, or hospitals.



WOMEN'S MINISTRY

in the **21st** century

The Encyclopedia
of Practical Ideas

Your go-to guide for fun and practical ways to **connect, engage, and inspire women!**

This fun-packed, easy-to-follow collection of ideas is just what you need by your side for reaching women of today. Every idea is designed to bring women into a closer relationship with God and each other. Use this guide to help transform your life and the lives of the women you serve, today!

Full of more than 250 ideas perfect for...

- ✦ Publicity
- ✦ Using social media in your ministry
- ✦ Girls' movie nights
- ✦ Friendship-building
- ✦ Service projects
- ✦ Ten-minute devotions
- ✦ Bible studies
- ✦ Prayer ideas
- ✦ Retreat themes
- ✦ Outreach ideas



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