


HOW TO IDENTIFY, TRAIN, & NURTURE

Women's Ministry
and Bible Study
Leaders in
Your Church



BIBLE STUDY
SOURCE
— *for women*



How to Identify, Recruit, Train and Nurture Women's Ministry and Bible Study Leaders in Your Church

Women's Ministries is one of the most vital ministries in the church, and developing women leaders is of utmost importance. Here are 14 key ways you can identify, recruit, train and nurture the leaders of women's ministries and women's Bible studies in your church.



WATCH.

Watch for the women who always show up to help. Regardless of what is asked of them, they pitch in. They are usually not the ones who step up and say pick me! They're not in it for the recognition. Whether its setting up chairs, running copies, or making coffee, these are the women who do everything with a joyful spirit and a thankful heart. They may not see themselves as leaders, so you'll need to encourage them to trust that God equips those he calls.

JUST ASK.

Most people like to help. But they also like to be asked. So often, people see an announcement in the church program about the need for new women's small group leaders. The typical reaction to that is: "Oh, I'm sure there are plenty of women much more qualified than me that will help." Or, "I don't have time to take on one more thing!" An announcement on Sunday morning or a bulletin blurb just doesn't have the same impact or result as personally asking a woman about her interest. Take the time to talk face-to-face so that together, you can determine if leading a group would be a good fit for her in this season of her life. You'll be surprised at how many women are willing to step up. They were just waiting for someone to ask.

NO IS NOT NEVER.

If you ask an individual to volunteer as a small group leader and they say no, don't take that as a rejection. It's quite possible their schedule just doesn't permit them to take on the added responsibility right now. Perhaps there is another role they can fill that doesn't require as much of a time commitment, such as running copies, assembling weekly handouts, making coffee, greeting at the door, etc. If someone says no to a bigger ask, offer them some options that will still allow them to feel like they are helping and a part of the team. When their schedules change, they are often the women who eventually step into a small group leader role.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY.

There is nothing worse than volunteering for a job then discovering the responsibility is nothing like you thought it would be. The women you ask to lead your groups need to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Not just now but in the weeks and months following. Gather your volunteer leaders together well before the study begins. Go over what their responsibilities will be and answer any questions they may have.



TRAIN.

Now that you have volunteers, don't stop there. If you want them to succeed in their roles as small group leaders, equip them. There are some excellent small group leader training resources available. Some churches will offer small group leader training classes a few times a year. That is an effective way to always have a pool of volunteers who feel equipped and ready to take on the task of leading their own groups. Check out *Making Your Small Group Work* by Henry Cloud, Bill Donahue, and John Townsend.

APPOINT A LIAISON.

If you are leading a women's ministry in a large church, it can be helpful to assign one woman to act as a liaison between you and all your small group leaders. This gives your leaders a point of contact they can reach out to with any questions or concerns that come up during the study. The liaison can also be the one to make sure your leaders are feeling supported and encouraged in their roles. This will be a tremendous support to you. Just make sure you are encouraging and supporting your liaison!

APPRECIATE.

Volunteers are the heartbeat of the church. Churches could not function without them. But when talking with people who have stepped down from a volunteer role in the church, whether it was leading a small group or collecting the offering on Sundays, the number one reason they say they stepped down is: I just felt burned out and unappreciated. Don't let that happen to your volunteer leaders. Take the time to thank them. Write them notes of encouragement and thanks. Help them see themselves as an "owner" in the ministry, not just a consumer or a critic. Establish a "we and us," not a "they" mentality. Gather them together for a time of prayer and fellowship apart from your weekly meetings. If you don't have time, ask your assistant or volunteer liaison to organize it. But if you are the leader in charge, you need to show up and show them you care and appreciate them for their time and commitment to the ministry and the women of the church.



CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT.

The quickest way to lose good volunteers is for them to feel the environment isn't safe for them to be open and honest – or to simply be themselves. Be sure to create a safe environment where every woman feels like they can share and not be judged or the subject of gossip behind their backs. Make it known that gossip will not be tolerated and is cause for dismissal from their leadership role. If you hear of gossip – especially the kind that is disguised in the form of prayer – nip it in the bud. Take the offender aside and graciously remind her that her “concern” is being misconstrued as gossip and needs to stop. And above all lead by example. When you set the tone in creating a safe place, the other women will follow.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

It is not if but when conflicts arise among your leaders (because it will happen), so address it immediately. Always talk with whomever is involved in the conflict individually first, then bring them together to help them talk through the issue and resolve it. Pray first, speak the truth in love and choose your words carefully. Set a godly example for resolving conflict and your volunteer leaders will follow your lead. Part of spiritual maturity is learning how to receive constructive feedback. If you find yourself at the center of a conflict or at the receiving end of criticism, be wise and open to what others want to share and say to you. Your example will set the tone for how others handle and resolve conflict.

BE REAL.

Don't feel like because you are in a position of leadership, you somehow must always have it all together. Volunteering to serve under someone who appears to be perfect is not only intimidating, it's not real. No one has a picture-perfect life, but social media can certainly make us believe they do. The more vulnerable and honest you can be with the women serving in your ministry, the more you give them permission to do the same. A healthy and honest ministry environment goes a long way in helping your volunteers feel loved and supported.



LOOK BEHIND YOU.

Encourage your leaders to build into the next generation. There is always someone coming up behind that simply needs a little encouragement to step into a leadership role. Teach your group leaders to be on the lookout for younger women in the church who have a heart for God and are pursuing a closer relationship with him. The Apostle Paul teaches in Titus 2 the importance of older women mentoring and teaching younger women in the church. Whether you are leading a large women's ministry or simply gathering a group of women from the church in your living room each week, mentoring relationships between older and younger generations can bring life and vitality to a church like few other things can.

BIGGER PICTURE.

Remind your leaders of the importance of their role. Cast the bigger vision that goes beyond what they can see each week in their small group. The time and effort they are giving is making a difference in the lives of women and the Kingdom of God. It will have a lasting effect, not only on the women they are leading and ministering to now, but their husbands and their children and their children's children. Their own families are watching and seeing them serve the Lord in a way that impacts people's lives for the better. Remind them to always listen for God's voice as they lead – and to remember they are ultimately serving an audience of One.

CELEBRATE.

Frequently celebrate and honor what God has done. Give the women in your church the opportunity to share life-changing stories. Don't just invite your leaders to these celebratory events – invite all the women in your church to come and celebrate what God is doing in the lives of people both inside and outside of your church. When people hear about God's love in action, hearts are moved and lives are changed.

LOVE.

Jesus said the number one way we show his love is by how we live and care for others:

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35 NIV

Above all else, make sure your ministry is driven by his love.



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