

What are your women's ministries plan for the year ahead? January is a great time to sit down with your team and plan strategically and intentionally. Here are seven steps for creating a ministry plan designed to help you accomplish your goals.

1. Identify

What is the goal of your women's ministries? How have you seen God leading? Where are the ways He's used your ministry in the past to impact people? What do you want to accomplish? As you think about what you want to see happen, consider:

- **Who** – Who are the women with whom you're attempting to connect? Church members? Actively involved? Those who are members but aren't attending regularly? The community? Are they married? Single? Young? Old?
- **What** – What are you hoping to accomplish? Develop friendships? Connect people more deeply with God? Offer community-connecting events that will attract the community and begin relationship building with church members?

It's very helpful to have a clear and concise mission statement written down. **Keep it short**—if you can't repeat it from memory, it's not helpful. **Use active verbs**—they show action. I've done this for my personal life and it helps me to evaluate the things I'm asked to do. (My mission statement is: "Encouraging, equipping and challenging people to grow deeply and serve uniquely.")

2. Evaluate

Look at what you've already done. How did it go? What was successful? What wasn't? Were there opportunities you realize that you missed ministering? With whom did you best connect? With whom did you not connect? What would you do again? What would you change? What would you like to do that you haven't done?

Schedule time to evaluate how the year is going at intervals during the year. As a team look at what you're doing, what you've scheduled and ask yourselves: How has God worked through our ministry? What has been successful? What do we need to change? Will this next event work after all? Is there something we should do differently because of what's already happened? Maybe God has opened an area of ministry that you weren't expecting—a group of people or opportunity you didn't plan for in the beginning. Adapting and changing ideas is not only okay, but helps create a stronger ministry plan.

3. Brainstorm

As a team begin listing possibilities. Throw everything on the board with the understanding that no idea is a bad idea. Include the things that have worked in the past, but also list new ideas. What have you seen others do that you'd like to try? Think outside the box. List ways you can connect with specific groups of women—teens, young adults, single moms, little girls, middle-aged women, professionals, juggling-way-too-much-and-can't-come-to-many-things women, etc. Once you feel like you've listed everything you can possibly think of, ask for three more ideas. Sometimes that challenge takes you to new places that people on your team may have thought about but weren't sure they should suggest.

4. Plan

Once you've brainstormed a huge list of things, compare your list with your mission statement. Choose ideas that will help you best accomplish your goals. There will always be a ton of great things we can do, however, we each have limited resources of time, energy, and money. So choose the things that most effectively help you accomplish your mission (but keep your list of possibilities for the future.)

5. Simple

Keep your schedule simple. It's easy to get excited and want to do a ton of things. But that can lead to being overwhelmed and may cause people to not come to anything if they can't come to everything. Choosing to do a couple of events and doing them well is more effective than attempting to do lots of things and running low on time/energy/resources.

6. Celebrate

After an event, take time as a team to meet and talk about how you saw God at work. Share the stories you heard from women who attended and the ways God blessed. Celebrate God's blessings and wins. It doesn't have to be a party or anything big, but a time to sit and reflect and take it in. Too many times we move immediately onto the next event without celebrating and enjoying God's blessings and really taking in the ways He's used us for His glory.

7. Pray

I've saved this for last, because I want to make sure it doesn't get lost in the list. Prayer is KEY to developing a strategic plan, accomplishing your goals, and creating a ministry that isn't just fun or nice, but reveals God and connects Him to people in a way that will impact and change lives. Do more than just a quick opening prayer or closing prayer. Spend time truly praying before, during and/or after each meeting. Invite everyone on your team to participate. Spend time thanking and praising God, as well as asking for wisdom, ideas, and guidance in planning. Bathe each event in prayer—prayer walking the room, praying over the invitations that go out, etc.

Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established. (Proverbs 16:3) When we commit to seeking God's will and plan for our ministries, bathing everything in prayer and working intentionally to accomplish the task He's set before us, God promises to bless.