

Transition to a Disciplemaking-Focused Women's Ministry

Jesus Christ called you to a new life (Galatians 2:20), clothed you with Himself (Galatians 3:26-27), commissioned you with a purpose (Matthew 28:19), and empowered you to fulfill that purpose (Acts 1:8)—to follow Him as His disciple and to live for Him as a disciplemaker (leading others to Him).

Has your ministry team been event-driven with one person overseeing Bible studies, another the retreat, & another the Christmas brunch? Does your current women's ministry need to have more structure and purpose to what you organize and fund? Now is the time to transition your women's ministry from being event-driven to disciplemaker-focused.

By the phrase, "women's ministry," we are referring to whatever is offered **to** women and **for** women. That includes what they should know to live out their commissioned two-fold purpose: 1) to follow Jesus as His disciple and 2) to live for Jesus as a disciplemaker.

When you transition your ministry to become more focused on disciplemaker, you can help the women of your church move away from dependence on traditional events and toward a lifestyle of making disciples who make disciples.

What Is Disciplemaking?

The terms "discipleship" and "disciplemaking" often get confused.

DISCIPLESHIP typically refers to the normal process for Christians to grow in their faith through Bible studies, prayer, worship, & small groups. It usually focuses on individual spiritual growth.

DISCIPLEMAKING includes seeing people trust in Christ and grow in their faith. It also includes training Christians to reach new people for Christ and help new believers grow in their faith so those can then reach their own peers for Christ. Disciplemaking makes disciples who make more disciples. It is others-focused.

An effective disciplemaker ministry is not necessarily a big or busy ministry but one that is **regularly reaching new people for Christ, building them up in the faith, and training them to reach their peers for Christ**. The local church is the best venue for disciplemaker to take place. (Adapted from Sonlife Ministries, *Growing Healthy Women in Ministry*, page 17)

As seen in the quote above, there are three phases to the disciplemaker process.

- **Regularly reaching new people** for Christ (the CONNECT phase)
- **Building them up in the faith** (the ESTABLISH phase)
- **Training and releasing them to reach** their generation for Christ (the LAUNCH phase)

All three are needed in a disciplemaker-focused ministry.

6-Step Strategy to Become More Disciplemaking-Focused

Start with prayer: Ask Jesus to show you the weak areas in your women's ministry regarding disciplemaker. Ask Him for courage to change some events or activities to encourage disciplemaker. Trust Him to help you see a better way for using your church resources and people to advance everyone into lifestyle disciplemaker. Then, proceed through the following steps.

There is a 6-step strategy to transition your women's ministry from event-driven to disciplemaker-focused.

1. **Evaluate** existing ministries for a disciplemaker purpose. Use the chart at the end of this booklet.
2. **Enhance** existing activities for disciplemaker.

3. **Replace** activities less effective for discipling.
4. **Consider** new ways to address the weak areas.
5. **Transform** the team to the discipling mission; determine response to new ministry suggestions.
6. **Recruit** a Discipling Coach to support discipling relationships and assist the leadership team.

Let us see what each one of those might look like in your ministry setting.

Step 1: EVALUATE existing ministries for their discipling purpose.

1. **Use the chart at the end of this booklet to list the activities you offer to women**, whether ongoing (weekly/monthly) or occasional (once a quarter/year). Be sure to include any training you already offer.
2. Consider the **primary purpose** of each activity. Designate that activity as one of these: **CONNECT** (reaches nonbelievers or prepares women to reach nonbelievers), **ESTABLISH** (grows women to establish strong roots as believers whether long-time or new), **LAUNCH** (launches women in their communities to reach their peers for Christ and prepares new leaders to establish believers both inside and outside of the church), or **UNCLEAR** if it has a discipling purpose.

Step 2: ENHANCE existing activities for discipling

Explore ways to **enhance** existing activities to make them more effective for discipling. Add these to the chart. This might include:

Connect:

- Making some ministries more receptive for new people, including childcare spots for the unchurched.
- Design the activity more for the community and promote it invitingly.
- Recruiting and preparing designated engagers for specific activities, including follow-up.

Establish:

- Adding a “beginners’ group” to your existing Bible studies.
- Offer a variety of study levels and cross-generational.
- Training your small group leaders for discipling in their groups.

Launch:

- Train and encourage women to connect with nonbelievers, practice telling their faith stories, and practice sharing the gospel message.
- Give training and encouragement to women to start and lead Bible studies outside of church ministries.
- Encourage mature Christian women to disciple newer ones.

Step 3: REPLACE activities less effective for discipling.

There may be some [activities] that you really love, that carry sentimental value for many people and that even accomplish good things. But they are no longer the right thing. Be willing to [stop] good things to make way for better things. (Heather Zempel, *Community Is Messy*, page 168)

Do some activities without a clear discipling purpose need to be changed or replaced with something new? Mark those in your chart. Consider how to replace those activities that have become less effective.

When we are truly open to the Lord's leading, we must be willing to let go of our cherished way of doing things if they are not successfully bringing new people to Jesus, establishing new believers well, and launching everyone into lifestyle discipling.

A few tweaks may not fix it. Sometimes those can be moved to another church ministry (local missions, hospitality, or assimilation) or released to an individual to continue doing it apart from women's ministry. Have a time of celebration and appreciation whenever you move or end a "traditional" activity.

Step 4: CONSIDER new ways to address the weak areas.

After you have done the evaluating of existing activities, consider the weak areas from your evaluation above. They might include these in a typical women's ministry:

- **Lack of preparedness to connect:** How can you do a better job of preparing and encouraging women to intentionally build relationships with unchurched women and share their faith in casual conversation as opportunity arises?
- The **disconnected:** Who is left out of your current ministry? Why? Where can you draw them into the community of women so they can grow and be encouraged to reach their peers for Christ? What if they work nights and weekends? Can you offer a variety of times to include them?
- The **immediate neighbors:** How do reach the women in the neighborhoods closest to your church?

Step 5: TRANSFORM the team to the discipling mission.

Adapt your leadership team members to the process of discipling (Connect, Establish, Launch) as a way of staying balanced in the areas of discipling. This will help you as a ministry **move beyond event-driven leadership**. The goal is to move the women of your church away from dependence on traditional event-driven ministries and toward a lifestyle of making disciples who make more disciples. Here is how to do that:

1. **MATCH** the leadership team members to one of three aspects of discipling (Connect, Establish, or Launch) as a way of staying balanced. Ask Jesus to draw each team member to one of those three aspects of discipling. For example:

The role of CONNECT leaders could include:

- **Look** at existing ministries and think about where you can incorporate connecting more effectively.
- **Consider** outreach events that aim to reach women in the neighborhoods surrounding the church.
- **Encourage** women to connect with their neighbors, coworkers and friends by putting ideas in your newsletter or having women share stories of what they are doing in this area. Keep it visible.
- **Provide** resources and opportunity for women to practice sharing their short faith stories and the gospel message. Use our "Prepare to Share" booklet as a resource.
- **Prepare** trained engagers for events. Use our "Designated Engager" preparation as a resource.

- **Work** with greeting team to get names of women visitors. Recruit someone to pray for her and connect with her.
- **Be** creative and stay focused on this, which is generally the weakest area of our church ministries and personal ministries. and s.

The role of ESTABLISH leaders could include:

- **Make sure** new believers are getting established. Provide readily accessible materials anyone can use.
- **Help** existing ministries effectively establish new and undisciplined Christians.
- **Look** for something that will draw in the women on the fringes—the one not in Bible study, small group or a women's class. Be creative with time, location and time commitment of study. Help her get to something that will help her to grow, even if it is one-on-one time with a mature believer who is flexible in her time schedule—somebody she already knows.
- **Plan** for every leader to have a co-leader who is an apprentice to learn from her.
- **Keep** encouraging the mature women with lots of Bible knowledge to focus on helping someone else who needs that information within their small groups and/or sphere of influence, trusting in Jesus to be able to do so.

The role of LAUNCH leaders could include:

- **Assess** any existing ministry's need for training to make it more effective for an aspect of discipling.
 - **Offer** training (annually or more often as needed) for women to effectively lead a small group of any kind—in the church and in the community—for discipling. Since small groups are fishing pools for young Christians, this is a great place to incorporate discipling and encourage it among the mature women who attend (participants as well as leaders).
 - **Recruit** and train a variety of women for your ministry teams—young, mature, single, married, with children, or without children.
 - **Encourage** leaders to develop coleaders who will be assistants in training for future leadership.
 - **Offer** "Prepare to Share" training or similar at least once a year in every ministry and every small group.
 - **Prepare** women to learn how to answer the tough questions.
 - **Coach** new ministry leaders and co-leaders.
2. **DETERMINE** how you will respond when others come to you with a ministry idea. Ask the questions below while praying for guidance:
- What would be the main purpose of this ministry related to Connect, Establish, or Launch?
 - Will this ministry activity reach nonbelievers? Will it produce new disciples? Support and fund what will lead to new disciples and disciplers.

Step 6: Recruit a Discipling Coach to support discipling relationships.

Recruit a Discipling Coach to support women in one-to-one discipling relationships and to assist your leadership team in staying focused on your discipling purpose. Ask Jesus to bring someone's name to mind you could ask—someone who has experience and a passion for lifestyle discipling.

Invite her to take it one step further and become a discipling coach for women in your church. A discipling coach simply helps other women stay focused on discipling, especially regarding women's ministry activities. This is what she might do as part of her coaching ministry:

- **Advise** the women's ministry team during planning sessions in determining whether existing activities or new ones being considered have any discipling purpose.
- **Oversee** the designated engagers for activities open to visitors.
- **Support** and encourage women who are discipling others. Remind them to stay dependent on the Holy **Spirit** as they are pursuing lifestyle discipling.
- **Supply** transferable one-to-one discipling resources (especially for new believers or anyone new to the Bible). Know where they are. Resupply as needed.

Remember the Purpose

The goal of making the transition to a discipling-focused ministry is to prepare and encourage every Christian woman to pursue lifestyle discipling in her daily walk with the Lord. That fulfills our commissioned purpose to follow Jesus as His disciple and to live for Him as a disciplingmaker throughout our lives.

If you need help with this transition, [invite Melanie Newton](#) to come to your church and lead your ministry team through this "Transition to a Discipling-Focused Ministry" strategy. We will work through each of the above 6 steps together to help you make your women's ministry more lifestyle discipling-focused.

Stay Christ-Focused

Discipling is the Lord Jesus Christ's idea and commission to all of His followers. What He calls us to do, He enables us to do through His Spirit at work in us and in the world. Trust Him to show you what to do as you transition your women's ministry from being event-driven to discipling-focused. Then, watch what He does!

Evaluate, Enhance, or Dissolve Existing Ministries

Determine the primary purpose for each activity:

- **CONNECT:** To draw in the nonbelievers from your community and/or encourage women to connect with nonbelievers in and out of church and share Christ with them.
- **ESTABLISH:** To help new believers get established in their faith and/or to help existing believers grow to maturity.
- **LAUNCH:** To train and encourage women to connect with nonbelievers and establish other believers in their daily lives
- **UNCLEAR:** That activity may not have a discipling purpose as it currently exists.

| Activity | Disciplemaking Purpose (Connect, Establish, Launch, Unclear) | Enhance for Disciplemaking | Dissolve (Celebrate and move to another ministry or end it) |
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