

## CREATING A SAFE PLACE IN A LOCAL CHURCH'S WOMEN'S MINISTRY

- If you do not have an established women's ministry, remember Lydia's starting place. Is your heart renewed and are you abiding in Christ? Look for two or three other women who are burdened for the women in your church. Meet regularly to pray for direction.
- With permission from your church leadership, do a survey of your women. (Consider the excellent survey in Susan Hunt's *Leader's Guide to By Design*, available by calling PCA Bookstore at 1-800-283-1357.)
- Listen! Listen! Listen! Do not ask women for their ideas if you do not intend to listen.
- Prioritize the needs expressed in the survey. If you are just beginning, pick one program, define your goal for the program, and then do it well. Be risk-takers in ministry; do not be afraid to try something new or to fail.
- Work in pairs. The workload is lighter, and the two women will develop a friendship. The second woman learns how to do the job and may offer a better way to do it. Her involvement equips her to take on the job when the leader is ready to move on to another ministry.
- Cultivate a servant's spirit, especially if your church leadership is reluctant toward a woman's ministry. Servants' hearts, available to do whatever needs to be done, open the door to deeper ministry.
- Be generous when it comes to the "sacred cows" in the church. A wise women's ministry team realizes that a program is sacred for a reason and, like Paul, recognizes each woman as significant. Maybe a certain woman met Christ in her circle. Maybe her Tuesday morning Bible study friends nurtured her through the crisis of her life or taught her how to be a godly mom or wife.

Instead of lining up "sacred cows" and shooting them, prayerfully develop a ministry that is completely different from the "sacred cow" program. Target a specific group in your church. Keep the women in the established ministry informed of your plans. Ask them to pray for God's direction for the women's ministry team. Tell them you value their participation and hope they will send one of their own to the new group in a sincere show of support. Explain that women's needs are varied and that you hope to offer a smorgasbord of choices to your women. Plan several special church-wide events so that all the women in the church can come together for a time of celebration and fellowship. The women's ministry does not have to be a war zone if we have servants' hearts.

- Yearly evaluations will eliminate the need to shoot the "sacred cows"! A statement of purpose for each event is critical.

- View the women's ministry as a training ground for strong, dynamic leadership. A wise women's ministry team will provide ample equipping opportunities for women in the church.
- An accepting heart is a trait of an encouraging church. Methodology is often a matter of personal preference. The seeds of many church conflicts are sown when we define another's personal preference or methodology as sin.

## A SAFE PLACE

**In an attempt to enfold a new woman into the church, you ask her to oversee the Vacation Bible School refreshments. Although she eagerly agrees, it doesn't take long to realize this is not her strength. She meets every creative idea with negative remarks and her presence is a cloud over each planning meeting. What response to her will get the job done, create a safe place for her to participate in ministry, and cultivate a compassionate community in this ministry?**



**ENCOURAGEMENT  
PRINCIPLE #6**

*Biblical encouragement creates a community of love that causes others to glorify God.*

**ASSIGNMENT FOR THE NEXT WEEK**

- Watch Chapter 7 Encouragement Stories video at [treasuresofencouragement.org](http://treasuresofencouragement.org)
- Read and complete the Staying Focused questions for Chapter 7, noting scriptures and statements God uses to change your perspective.
- Use the following to write a summary of this lesson:
  - Write a summary statement of Chapter 7.
  - List a few things from the chapter that were helpful to you.
  - How did this chapter change or inform your thinking about encouragement?
  - Write a prayer based on some of the scriptures in this chapter.
  - How would you like for others to pray for you as you seek to apply the scriptures in this chapter to your life?
- Complete your group encouragement assignment.
- Come prepared to share one way God directed you to cultivate community in your local church this week.

- Add to your friend’s “Joy Box.”
- Pray with your prayer partner. Personalize the Praying Scripture for your local church.
- **Bonus:** Listen to the suggested Chapter 6 Help & Hope podcasts at [www.treasuresofencouragement.org](http://www.treasuresofencouragement.org).
  - *See Me, Not My Disability — A Conversation with Tim Merkel*
  - *The Amish Schoolhouse Shooting: A Light in the Darkness — A Conversation with Marie Monville*



### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

ROMANS 15:5-7 (NIV)

