This is lesson number 19: How to Set Up a Women’s Ministry in the Church. In our last lesson, we looked at a specialized facet of women’s ministry; and now I want to show how this Heart to Heart group fits into the overall program for the women in your church.

How do you go about establishing an effective ministry that will serve the most possible number of women in your church? For years, most churches had circle meetings for homemakers to meet together with other homemakers for fellowship, prayer, and coffee. The meetings were usually scheduled in various homes to accommodate the different parts of a town or community. As churches grew and needs changed, the circles stopped meeting the needs of all of the women involved, but where do you begin to change a format that has been in existence for so many years?

The very first question that needs to be asked by those who are wanting to establish something within the church body that will minister to the largest group of women possible is “What are the unique needs of this particular group of women?” How do you begin finding out, and who is going to take it upon herself to pursue these questions? Sure, it’s easier for larger churches who can hire a woman to come into its body and set up from start to finish a flourishing work that draws crowds of women instantly, but that’s not the norm. Sometimes, if a particular few women are burdened for the life of the women in their church, how can they instill in the other women this concern?

The first step, then, might be to call an informal meeting of several interested women who are willing to get together and pray for God’s leading in the venture—to pray for a stirred-up interest in the women in the body of the church and for guidance as to finding the most effective approach to meet these goals. There are numerous books available to groups in starting such a work. One such book was written by Vickie Kraft for Moody Press.
in 1992. Every church needs a vital women’s ministry. Nothing else can accomplish what an effective ministry to women by women will do. Male leadership in the church needs to provide an atmosphere where women can grow, blossom, and develop to their full potential with the blessing, provision, protection, and encouragement of the church leadership. Each woman is unique. There is no one exactly like you or me in all the world. Each of us is influential in the sphere God has given to us in which to make an impact upon our families, churches, place of employment, and our friends. For that reason, each of us is responsible and accountable to God for how we use the gifts and opportunities He has given to us. Each of us will individually stand before Him.

This is the message you need to take to the women of your church when you can demonstrate from Scripture how God values them and they begin to serve Him with enthusiasm. We as women can make a difference in what happens in our churches.

As we have seen in earlier lessons, Paul tells us in Titus 2:1–7 that older women are to teach what is good in order to encourage younger women “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being submissive to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.” Paul gave this admonition against a backdrop of a culture that, according to 1:12–16, were “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons, . . . [who] profess to know God, but by their deeds deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” Doesn’t that sound a lot like our society today? Where is our distinctiveness? Where are our role models of godly women who will lead those who will come after to a close walk with our Savior?

Many young women today come to Christ who have not been reared in godly homes. They may have had parents who were nominally Christian or attended church, but who at the same time did not demonstrate the life of Christ in their daily routines. These young women don’t know what a godly woman, wife, or mother is like, and they need to have that modeled before them. And no one can model a godly Christian woman, except whom? A godly Christian woman.

Like the Isle of Crete where Titus was ministering, there was a lot of false teaching. Without a strong biblical perspective, people will be confused, they’ll be deceived, and they’ll be dissatisfied. So Titus was to admonish the believers there to conduct themselves in a manner that would be proper to the Scriptures that he knew.
They first needed to be taught sound doctrine, and then they needed to have godly behavior modeled for them. So often it is difficult to distinguish believers from nonbelievers. Christian women need to know what being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ looks like in the flesh. Paul instructs Titus himself to teach the older men, the younger men, and the older women, as well as set for them an excellent example.

But when the younger women are being considered, Paul tells the older women to teach and to model for them a godly lifestyle. A ministry of women to women is vitally needed in this day and time. The hours needed to walk some women through difficult times is best suited to other women. Pastors do not have the time, nor should they spend the hours needed to work with the women on such an intimate basis.

There are numerous other reasons why women can be effective in ministry to women. Who, but another woman, can fully understand all the various aspects of pregnancy and childbearing, postpartum blues, and the new rage term PMS. Women understand well how a young mother’s world can shrink so drastically that she can sometimes feel isolated from the rest of society. Sometimes just a sympathetic ear can do wonders to lift the spirits of these moms.

A wise woman can sometimes be of help when abuse occurs in the home. Often abused wives will go to a woman more easily. They can be guided to seek proper help from the leadership in the church. Through mutual understanding and wise teaching, the older women can guide the younger women biblically, both with sound Bible teaching and modeling, total dependency upon Christ, showing by example His sufficiency for life. Older women have much to teach younger women.

Our Titus passage says that the older women are to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good (2:3). If, in fact, when God commands us to do something, by doing it we are actually worshiping Him with our obedience; then, as we submit to the Holy Spirit’s leading in our daily walk, we are worshiping. That includes every aspect of our lives. For a woman to give a submission to her husband is an act of worshiping our Lord. To be in physical union with one’s mate is an act of worship. To be keepers of home and whatever that involves is an act of worship. We cannot divide the “sacred from the secular” if, in fact, God has commanded us to be filled with the Spirit. If we are walking in the Spirit, then all activity
should be as a sweet savor to our God. Regardless of whether a woman is teaching Sunday school or driving a car pool, if it’s done as unto the Lord, then it’s spiritual. Older women need to model this kind of lifestyle to the younger women.

Next an older woman is to model what it means not to slander. The word is used in Scripture in reference to both men and women who are given to finding fault with the demeanor and conduct of others and spreading their innuendos and criticisms in the church. In our Titus passage, Paul is instructing older women to not be as this kind of people. Women who model godly character should keep confidence as well and not be a party to spreading rumors.

I have heard the statement, “In order that you might pray more effectively, let me tell you about this person.” I’ve heard this so many times. Some Christians feel that if they preface their gossip with prayer words, it makes everything all right. Godly women must model for the younger women the appropriate responses. Drunkenness is not a characteristic of a godly person. In Ephesians 5:18, Paul says, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.” Paul is contrasting control by the Holy Spirit as opposed to being controlled by alcohol. The person who is controlled by alcohol is usually not in control of those behaviors which evidence the control of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Paul is admonishing the older women to evidence the Spirit’s control in their lives. If the older women teach what is good, they will guide the younger women to a pursuit of obedience to God’s Word, which will be evidenced in the way they relate to their husbands and their children. This topic was covered in our lesson on homemaker ministry. Women who follow the examples of godly older women will provide no occasion for the Word of God to be discredited.

In order to establish a meaningful women’s ministry for your church, it will be necessary to investigate the particular desires of the women in your church. For my particular church, the women’s ministry board decided to suspend all activity for a whole year to invest the time in research and prayer. A survey was given to each woman in the church to determine her interests and needs. In the survey, the women were asked to check which area of need they would like to see met by the women’s ministry program—worship, fellowship, instruction, or evangelism. Then they were to check as many areas of interest as they would like. These areas included
community outreach, hospital visitation, Bible study, discipleship, prayer, lay counseling, political action groups, food ministry, sewing, new skills in homemaking, mother’s encouragement, exercise, weight reduction support, international students, three score or more groups, hospitality for new members, missions, church grounds beautification, support groups, or anything else that they would like incorporated into the program. Next, they were asked to give their age and whether or not they had been active in a circle during the past year and, if not, why not. The committee also inquired as to whether the women worked full time outside the home. Any additional comments or questions were encouraged.

In addition to surveying the women of the church, the women on the board contacted churches around the country that had successfully approved programs for ministry to women. They were looking for qualities these programs had in common that made them effective. The committee discovered several features common to these effective ministries. Number one, women wanted more sessions, not less—weekly rather than monthly. Number two, women wanted Bible study, not projects of mission should be the main focus. Number three, diversity was essential. For example, electives for interest. And then the fourth, programs with a woman on the church staff had greater continuity and effectiveness.

Now out of this research came twelve elements that constituted an effective women’s ministry. An effective women’s ministry program will start with prayer, know its people, enlist church leadership, have specific goals, be led by women, develop leadership, be built on Bible study, have variety, provide support groups, have an outreach, encourage personal friendships, and be flexible and relevant. These twelve elements were developed into a philosophy of women’s ministry to be the core behind the entire program. For example, if you are the only one interested in developing a women’s ministry program, begin to pray and ask God to give you one or two other women who would be willing to meet with you and pray. Include the pastor’s wife if at all possible. As you all meet regularly to pray, begin to ask God about some of these things.

Number one, ask Him, how open is the leadership of the church to a women’s ministry program. Number two, if you presently have a program for women, how effective is it? Are you involved in it? How open are the women involved in the present ministry to
evaluation and possible change of emphasis? Pray about these things. When would it be appropriate to involve your pastor in your ideas?

Next, what kind of resource people do you have among your church women? Also, whom could you enlist for leadership and support for this ministry? How should you approach both leadership and other women? What direction should your ministry to women take? How would God have you begin? How can God use you to encourage and strengthen your church? How can God use to encourage and strengthen your pastor? Ask God to protect you from a critical spirit. Remember, if the program for your church is going to be effective, you must know your people. The make-up of each group is so different and the necessities will be unique. Find out how many women are working outside the home, the general age group breakdown of the group, and how many still have young children. This will help you determine whether your group should meet in the evening or in the daytime or possibly both if your church is larger and can support it. Find out about the previous women’s ministry in your church and determine how that will impact your future plans. What did they do that worked? What did they do that didn’t work? Whether your church is an urban or a neighborhood church will sometimes dictate how often and when you will be able to meet.

When organizing a women’s ministry program, it is very important to share your vision with the male leadership in your church. Many women who have helped establish women’s ministries in their churches say that it is vitally important to be put into the church budget, which validates the need for a ministry of this type. Usually the offerings taken up at the meetings are returned to the church general fund to help defray expenses. A lot of church leaders in the women’s program tell me that their organization is completely self-supporting, but that they still need the validation by having the church budget use them as well. This approach just lets the women of the church know that the entire church is behind their efforts.

In these initial planning stages, it is helpful to invite the elders and their wives for dinner and present them with a folder containing the program laid out clearly, answer their questions, and thoroughly discuss your vision for the women of your church. This is a key time, because it is essential for the pastor and elders to understand the need to provide for the women of the church. They have to recognize that women have needs only women
can meet and there is a great need to delegate that ministry to spiritually mature women who can design and implement the program. Church leadership for its part must provide the facilities, the personnel, and money necessary as an integral part of the church program.

Mrs. Kraft likens the relationship of the women’s ministry program to the overall church ministry, much as the relationship of a wife to a husband. The husband provides the environment for the wife to accomplish the ministry given to her by God in the home. That supportive environment includes providing the finances necessary to accomplish their mutual goals.

Important goals for this type of program are to minister to the needs of the church women, to encourage their growth to spiritual maturity, to equip women to serve others in the church, and to provide opportunities and encouragement and ministry to the community. Without an extended community service, most women’s ministry programs will fail.

An extensive women’s ministry program necessitates some type of woman leader, preferably a paid position, either part-time or full-time. If it’s a volunteer, then if that’s all you can justify at the time, then at least that’s a start. A staff person would have time to focus her attention on the needs of the women. This staff person would meet regularly with the church staff, so that she could speak for the women of the church. She could correlate their ministry with all other church activities, and she could add the relational insight that women bring to the table.

This staff person would also be more available for counseling purposes. Many seminaries and Bible colleges are graduating women who have been highly trained and could fill these positions if churches realize the need for a ministry to coordinate women in a group. The goal of the staff person would be to engage other women to become involved to complete the jobs needed. When you give a woman an opportunity to serve in a position for which she is gifted, you set her up for success, and she will want to keep serving. If your church is able to provide a women’s ministry board, the size will be determined by the size of your church. If there is no director of women, it will be helpful for your pastor to appoint a woman with spiritual maturity and organizational skills to serve as chairman of the women’s ministries. Then she should pray and seek out other women to work with her as a team: women who have a love and vision for women.
After more planning, it will be discovered that because there will be several areas of interest, a different women’s need is necessary to have a different head for each area for which she can be responsible. The order of arrangement for a board of this kind would consist of a director of women’s ministries, preferably a paid staff as the main organizer. Under her leadership is a board chairman, an advisor who is like a co-chairman to take part of the load of responsibility. Under the board chairman will be a number of coordinators for various programs—a day program coordinator, an evening program coordinator, a special events coordinator, a hospitality coordinator, an electives coordinator, a communications coordinator, a Heart to Heart coordinator (which we discussed in our previous lesson involving the older women mentoring the younger women), and an outreach coordinator. This spreads the overall responsibility of the ministry like Moses did by selecting the seventy elders in Numbers 11:17, so that “they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you shall not bear it all alone.” Also this practice will develop more leadership in the church. One of the goals of your program, remember, is to develop women leaders to serve women. The coordinator should be free to be creative and innovative within the guidelines set by the board. No one is just doing her own thing. There should be accountability between the board members allowing for each woman’s unique gifts to be utilized. This freedom with supervision is the secret of achieving the variety that makes a program successful.

You need to be open to new ideas. Don’t say, “We’ve never done it like that before” or “That won’t work.” Make the program meet the needs of your women rather than forcing the women into an obsolete mold. The women’s ministry board is accountable to the elder board of the church and must follow their guidelines and report to them when requested. The women’s staff person will report to the associate pastor on a bi-monthly basis to keep the leadership informed about the activities of the women’s program.

In looking at the job description of the director of women’s ministries, we see that she will need to report to both a member of the pastoral staff, and in most cases it will be an assistant pastor, and to the elder board. Her primary function will be to oversee the women’s ministry program. Her responsibilities to the women will be to plan, promote, and coordinate weekly a women’s ministry program and to prepare and teach Bible lessons at the meetings. Remember, I said that in their survey, they found that the women wanted strong Bible teaching as a priority. This women’s leader is to meet regularly with the women’s ministry board.
She is to assist members of the board in accomplishing their responsibilities. She is to recruit new women’s ministry board members. She is to recruit Bible teachers, preferably within her own church, because remember one of the goals of a women’s ministry is to develop and encourage the leadership that you individually have in your church. She is to help recruit leaders for the elective courses. She is to coordinate training for support counseling ministries. She is to carry out discipleship and leadership development. She is to provide personal counseling on request. She is to prepare and administer the women’s ministry’s budget. She is to speak to individual groups as an encouragement for her women’s ministry program. She is to do hospital visitation. She is to supervise women interns from seminaries if they are available. She is to supervise and participate in the yearly retreat and other special events. She is to supervise and approve all ministries for women in the church and the community outreach, so that they will coordinate together. And on a monthly basis, she will have a Bible study with the support staff women.

Now you can see with all of these requirements for the director of women’s ministry how important it would be to have this a paid position so that she could devote her full-time efforts to this ministry. The staff person is responsible to attend weekly church staff meetings, report biweekly to the pastoral staff person assigned, and to report in writing and in person to the elder board as they request it. In order for a program of this type to continue to flourish, it is extremely necessary to develop leadership among the women. You could use the skills that you learned in our lesson on spiritual gifts to help the women discover their unique abilities, and then match the women to the task for which they are gifted. If you’ll remember what I said about the spiritual gifts is that it is an ability that God gives to us. It is not an office, and so each woman who has special abilities can be fit into different programs when needed.

It is necessary to construct a sound women’s ministry board. Many churches have found it to be successful to stagger the two-year terms so that only half of the women go off each year, and that keeps continuity on the existing board. Throughout the year, discuss potential candidates for these positions. Be on the lookout for women to develop as leaders who have shown commitment to the program. Consider women who attend regularly, who may have taught electives, who often volunteer to serve, who demonstrate responsibility and skill in service that they’ve done, whose lives evidence a love for God, who love and
care for other women, and who are members of the church. In all of this observation, you must consider each woman’s giftedness. The women who are to serve on the board need to know that their responsibilities need to take priority over any other, outside home and family responsibilities. They need to give, of course, their first priority to their home and families, but then in anything they do they need to know that their responsibility to the board, if that’s their position, should take priority. They need to get to know the women in their churches and minister to them.

As a chairman of the board is leading, the women’s staff person and the present chairman will choose the successor from board members who are serving in their second year. There’s a new chairman each year, because then this will often give such new vitality to the board that it will bring in new ideas and new personalities that will keep this whole thing perpetuating. Each year it’s helpful for the board to have a weekend retreat to evaluate every aspect of the program. They will examine job descriptions and amend those to accurately reflect the job that a particular one has become. They will discuss the entire program for the coming year and change some things and plan new activities.

A key to having a women’s program run smoothly is to encourage its leadership. The best way to develop leaders is to balance supervision with freedom. Each individual woman has a personal style and creativity that we encourage her to cultivate. A women’s ministry program should be committed to developing women, not just putting on a program, so the delegation of responsibilities is more important than perfection of performance.

This type of program will build on Bible study (remember, that is one of their key interests in this program). The Bible should be the central focus of a vital women’s ministries program. The Word of God is what will keep us all on track. It will keep our priorities straight and our lives focused on godly living. You can get women to come to a lot of different programs that interest them, but you’ll not have the steady spiritual growth desired without consistent teaching of the Scriptures as relevant to the lives of women today.

The goal of your ministry should always be to develop maturity. As Ephesians 4:11–13 says, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” So maturity is what our goal is. I have personally taught women’s
Bible studies for twenty-five years; and I never ceased to be amazed at the tremendous hunger for God’s Word they have. Tap into this desire of your women and feed them into your women’s ministry program.

Remember that there will be women of all levels of maturity, even some nonbelievers who might be brought by friends, so incorporate the gospel message frequently in the general session. Do not assume anything. I can remember in one of my Bible classes, a dear woman came up to me after class and asked me quietly if I would read to her the pronunciation of each book of the Bible so that she would not be embarrassed when she was discussing these books with other women. And then on the other hand, I had women in my class who had taught Bible for many years, and so you must be sensitive to this diversity of women in your congregation.

Many women in leadership have found that it’s advantageous for a women’s ministry program in their church to be divided into three sessions of six to ten weeks each. A possible suggestion might be to have a fall session, which begins in mid-September and ends in mid-November. This frees up the holiday season. The women will be so involved with their families and friends during this time. The winter session could begin the week after New Year’s week and end in mid-March. You need to allow for a children’s spring break somewhere in there. Start the spring session from late March to mid-May, and then, of course, the summertime is off because the women will be more involved with their schoolchildren who will be at home.

There are many advantages to these shorter complete sessions. For one thing, it’s much easier to get a teacher for this short of a time. Allow the teachers to prepare their own Bible studies. Sometimes you can find teachers in women who have participated in Bible Study Fellowship or some parachurch ministry, or just a godly woman who blesses others with her wisdom when she teaches. Ask them if they will consider teaching for a session. It is best to develop the gifts of your own women in your church, and this won’t happen if you continually go outside the church to get “experts” to do the job.

Variety is very important in a women’s ministry program. A weekly program can consist of two segments. The first part of the program is a general session for Bible study with all of the women present. After the study, allow about fifteen minutes for
announcements—service opportunities, testimonies, special music, and an offering. Remember, the offering goes into the general fund of the church. Second, offer various electives of interest groups. They can range from developing spiritual and practical skills to support groups. Some suggestions could be various crafts taught like English smocking, cross-stitch, quilting, calligraphy, flower arrangements, Christmas crafts; or developing one’s spiritual life with Scripture memory, training in evangelism, prayer, biblical counseling, studying the Bible on your own; or various family helps like nutrition, aerobics, CPR, self-image, legal matters, weight management, microwave cooking, and many others.

These small groups accomplish a number of things. The first thing that they accomplish is that they enable women to get to know each other because the group is smaller and they meet for several weeks. Number two, the women learn some skill—spiritual or practical—that they have needed or wanted to learn, so they grow in ability and confidence. Number three, the women learn to care and pray for each other because fifteen minutes of the elective time is allotted for sharing and prayer. The fourth reason that these small groups are effective is that leading these groups provides many women an opportunity to serve the Lord with all of their skills.

I can remember teaching knitting classes in my women’s ministry program at our church. I had taught Bible for so many years and so I thought that I would teach knitting, and that was a really unique experience to get to know the women and to say that I could teach any person how to knit. I changed my mind after six weeks of instruction, but these are real helpful times to get to know the women and to build lasting friendships. They’re not limited to only teaching the Bible or working in the kitchen or nursery. The fifth reason that these little groups are helpful is that the electives are an obvious way to spot new leaders for women’s ministries.

It is important to stick with a pretty set time schedule so that the women can count on how long they will be involved. For example, some women’s ministry programs which meet in the morning will have coffee and fellowship from 9:15–9:30. You’d be amazed at how many women are there right at 9:15. Singing from 9:30–9:40. A Bible lesson from 9:40–10:30. Announcements, recruiting, offering, and special music from 10:30–10:45. An elective time from 10:45–12:00, including in that last time fifteen minutes for prayer and sharing, and then the women know that they can leave
because many of them have to meet carpool.

Most churches I’m involved with look forward to their annual retreats. These retreats are most effective if they can be held outside of the city or the community because it helps the women to get away from their constant family responsibilities for a weekend. These retreats have several purposes. One is to provide an opportunity to nurture existing relationships and to build new ones through small- and large-group activities. Another purpose is to have a concentrated time of Bible teaching from a skilled Bible teacher. Also in their busy schedules, these women can find opportunities for restoration and refreshment.

I have taught many of these retreats for women across the country; and I am so excited every time I go looking at the enthusiasm of these women to get away from their normal routines and to have a quiet time away from the busyness of their worlds, just to be with God, to interact in Bible study, and to be encouraged by the leadership of their church. It’s an exciting time, and you’d be amazed at the number of women or the percentage of women in these churches who attend these weekend retreats. These retreats take a lot of special planning, and the women who tell me that are on these committees say that it takes the whole year. They choose different tasks, and they have so much help from various parts of the retreat, but they have to work on registration and skits and free-time activities, and hospitality; and, you’ll remember, women are usually particular about their food, and many of them are on diets. And if you don’t talk completely with the coordinators at a particular campground, sometimes they’re not geared for the kind of foods that women would like.

Other special events during the year can be effectively used to include the spouses or friends of the women. Get-togethers in the evenings so that the spouses can see what their wives have been doing all year and why their personalities are changing and why they’re having different input into their families.

Another facet of women’s ministry are the support groups. They are very necessary for an effective women’s ministry program. Specialty groups for young moms, for divorce recovery, for abortion recovery, and many others will be usually well attended. You’re going to be amazed at the participants from your church in these groups.

Outreach is a vital part of the ministry. Outreach into the
community is very enriching for the women of your church. Remember, missions begins at home and extends around the world. Our women need to be taught the importance of outreach. Women have been able to help the homeless or volunteer at crisis pregnancy centers. This takes a lot of time, because these women who are involved will walk young women through the whole nine months of their pregnancies, sometimes taking them to their doctors, sometimes providing transportation, sometimes giving them food, helping them get into parenting classes, maybe attending their birthing classes with them, buying them baby clothes. The women who are involved in this part of the program tell me that it’s a tremendously enriching experience for them.

They can also help with abortion recovery. The world says that abortion is something that’s easily done. We in our Christian communities know that this is not true, and so it’s a tremendous outreach for the women in the churches to work with women who have gone through abortion, to help them to a time of healing and forgiveness.

They need to make hospital visitations for the people in the churches, the tremendous list of sick people and the needs that they have. To provide food services for people who are coming home from the hospital for whatever reason. To help new mothers, perhaps in teaching them how to bathe their children or just teaching them some basic skills. Be a part of the welcoming newcomer’s group. Help in the church office. Many other services. If you have a coordinated women’s ministry program, this can be accomplished.

One of the main purposes of the women’s ministry program is to encourage personal friendships. Women are longing for friendships with other women. Serving on committees and boards together, taking an elective together, going on a retreat, praying together all provide opportunities for friendships to develop. Fellowship is more than just tea and cookies. It’s working together toward a common goal.

Another facet of this type of program needs flexibility and relevancy. There are two key terms for women’s ministry program—we’ve got to be flexible. A women’s ministry program that is supported by church leadership provides a protective umbrella under which its activities can function; but underneath that umbrella, there’s got to be flexibility. The women in your church are unique from the women in my church. Their needs
are different. Their hopes and dreams are different, and so your responsibilities will be different. You will need to approach each particular function from the perspective of your church. In that way, there are not many independent, overlapping things going on and no central coordination or focus that is not there because you’ve got to have coordination with your group.

There’s accountability, which is absolutely essential. Various groups in the church have specialty needs like the businesswomen whose hours aren’t as flexible as those of homemakers. In order for our women’s ministry program to meet their needs, flexibility is necessary. Some of the programs will be different for the working woman. We’ve talked about this to a certain extent in teaching them Bible in a businesswomen’s group; but if you’re incorporating this businesswomen’s group into the whole church program, then you might want to consider a Wednesday evening program for the businesswomen, after hours so that they can participate. Their electives might be different as well.

Approximately thirty-eight million women in the United States were born between 1946 and 1964. These are the baby boomers, which we had talked about before, and they are right now between the ages of 27 and 45. This is the first complete generation raised on television. It has also been influenced by the turmoil of the sixties, the period which set up the feminist movement and so much unrest among the women in our nation. We have discussed this generation in other lessons, so we’re familiar with some of the new challenges for women’s ministry programs. Things that used to work in the past are not working now. It doesn’t mean that we’re changing our doctrine. It doesn’t mean that we’re changing our focus on the Word of God. It tells us that we’re changing the way we’re communicating the truths of God’s Word to a generation that is entirely different from the generations of the past and how we will need to become aware of the unique needs of this generation in order to lead them to a closer walk with Christ. We can’t rest on what we used to do. We can’t say to our women, “Oh, we’ve never done it this way before.” Each program will have its own special problems. If your church is primarily made up of older women, you will need to develop an outreach to attract younger women. If you can offer a program that has a Bible study that addresses relevant life issues and also offers electives that interest younger women, they’ll come if you invite them.

I know that when my daughter-in-law and son moved into a new
house, they lived in a community where there was a little church that had nothing but older women. And these older women just descended upon my son and his wife when they had a new baby; and they brought them food, and they visited them, and they helped them clean house, and then they invited them to church. Well, what did they do but attend that little Baptist church because the older women reached out to them in such a loving way. This can be a wonderful outreach for your neighborhoods.

Some churches have the opposite situation—mostly younger women. I have seen churches where the oldest woman in the congregation was forty. In this case, the pastor’s wife and the wives of the elders may have to assume the older women’s roles. You’ll need to personally recruit older women. Make them feel needed.

What happens when the leadership is not supportive? This is a very difficult problem. Sometimes the leadership is not supportive because the men sincerely believe that women should not have any positions of leadership at all in the church. You will not get anywhere by being militant or demanding your rights. Remember, your initial step must be prayer—prayer to seek God’s leading and to determine what is best for your church. Creating factions certainly isn’t best, and sometimes it is best to wait quietly, praying, and allow God to move in the hearts of the leadership.

Meet with your pastor and share your vision with him for the women in your church. Ask him if he would teach a group of mature women who want to obey God’s command. Get him involved in your hopes and dreams. He might be willing to do this, or he might be willing to provide someone to do it for him. If the answer is still no, then you must trust that God will meet the needs of the women in your church in His timing, not necessarily in yours. But do not go over the authority of the leadership in your church, because God does not bless this. Remember, God has established a system of order in our churches, and God has placed leadership over us, and He commands that we fit within the bounds of that leadership.