



Creating Space for More Female Leaders

This resource is for men and women who want to develop female leaders on their teams. This often happens naturally for men, but for women, it requires intentional effort.

While not exhaustive, this list is a starting point to spark meaningful conversations within your teams. We encourage you to pray through these ideas and then discuss how to create more opportunities for female leaders within your church with your leadership.

How can we help the women on our church staff teams?

- **Be consistent.**
 - Choose always to have her back. For some men and women, this can be a passion – to see women doing the work of ministry with men.
- **Be intentional.**
 - If an opportunity arises, consider, “Would she be a good fit for this?” Also, teach about women doing the work of ministry in the Bible (it’s there.). I know of several churches that intentionally have taken on the task of studying this topic together and eventually rewrote their by-laws.
 - Women should be included in decision-making meetings and asked for input.
 - Women leaders think, feel, and minister differently, and they need your emotional intelligence in how you go about mentoring them.
- **Be creative.**
 - Sometimes, opportunities can be created when there might be opposition. It may mean doing the work of a Pastor with the title Director, but getting the experience to move on to something else can be invaluable.
 - Be open to mentorship between the genders.
- **Be affirming.**
 - Model how to speak well of the women on your staff and the women leading. One of my colleagues said, “I always spoke of women as co-laborers, colleagues, and peers from the pulpit and in ministry settings.” Read and use sources written by women and quote them in your sermons.
- **Be a “bringer.”**
 - Bring (2 or more) people to lunch - instead of just having lunch with one of the guys on your staff team, why not invite a few of your leaders, both men and women?
- **Be an investor.**
 - Invest in leadership development opportunities, such as coaching and conferences (yes, even pre-conferences), for your female leaders, especially the dedicated and emerging leaders on your team.

- **Be inquisitive.**
 - Start treading, listening, and discussing this “better together” topic with your staff. There are some great resources out there, and making it a priority to start the discovery process is a significant first step.
- **Be supportive.**
 - Recognize that our struggles, needs, and processes are unique. We might need more encouragement or push to tackle things we are good at but are hesitant to start.
 - Women often receive awkward comments or outright obscene comments from people within the church, both staff members and churchgoers. This can be sexual harassment and must be stopped.
 - Listen to and believe a woman when she encounters awkward and obscene treatment. Ask how she can be protected from these comments.
- **Be transparent.**
 - If the church has a policy on women and roles - state it.
 - If the church has a rule about oversight, titles, and benefits based on such - post it.
 - If the church has an org chart that shows levels clearly - disclose it.
 - If the church has social rules—for example, women and men can’t have lunch together—print them in a handbook.
 - Have a handbook and a clear explanation of benefits at all levels so a woman can see the limitations before she hits her head on the ceiling repeatedly.
- **Be aware.**
 - When you see aspects that create unintentional barriers or challenges, mention how it can complicate women being in those spaces.
 - If women are allowed at the top, don't cap it at only one. Make it possible for women to continue to move through the organization in the same manner a man could.
 - Of the language and assumptions that are being said and done.
 - If women are to be included and welcomed, we must remove the pre-assumed bias from our conversations.
 - How often are women seen in various roles? It's one thing to say that they are welcomed and another for it to be lived out.
- **Be an advocate for her view.**
 - Even if your current church structure doesn't allow for women at specific levels for leadership (i.e., a “vote”), giving women a “view” and a “voice” to share with the leadership is vital.
- **Be caring.**
 - As her pastor, get to know her, her family, her skill sets, her professional & educational background, etc.
- **Be a champion.**
 - Invite someone you trust to help be a champion for the women on your staff.
 - Giving specific and public credit for ideas or praise for successful initiatives.
 - This could either be a comment during the worship service, staff meeting or as a part of a churchwide business meeting.