

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

H a n d b o o k

*Ideas, Plans, and Programs
for Effective Women's Ministries*

J u a n i t a P u r c e l l

REGULAR BAPTIST PRESS
1300 North Meacham Road
Schaumburg, Illinois 60173

Special Thanks
to these ladies who shared ideas and programs
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Foreword

Look around the church auditorium at any given service and you will almost certainly see more women than men. These women may be young, middle-age, or senior. They may be single, married, or single again. Some of them may not be part of God's family; others are newcomers to the family; some are spiritually mature. All of them have needs of one kind or another. And while some of these women minister in the church, many of them are looking to the church to minister to them.

Beyond Sunday School classes and regular church services, what is your church doing to minister to women? Are you reaching out to the women in your community? This book is designed to give you ideas, plans, and programs for an effective women's ministry.

Regular Baptist Press started the Women's Studies Series to provide Bible study materials for ladies' Bible studies. Juanita Purcell was instrumental in the start of this ministry because she had already developed and taught several Bible studies and because she had had an effective ministry to women in the churches her husband pastored.

Through the years ladies have asked for help with women's ministries. And as Juanita has traveled around the country, women have asked her to "flesh out" for them the successful Ladies' Luncheon program she hosted. As a result of these inquiries—and sensing that much more could be done in our churches—we asked Juanita to describe her own ministry and to gather ideas from other churches so that women could have a resource in planning their own ministries. The result of Juanita's work is this *Women's Ministries Handbook*. We pray that God will be pleased to use it in your church to help you meet the needs of the ladies in your church and beyond.

—Valerie Wilson
Editor, Women's Materials
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CHAPTER 1

Where Do I Start?

START WITH what you've got! When I first started ministering to women, I felt very inadequate. My husband had just finished Bible college, and I was a full-fledged pastor's wife who didn't have a clue as to what I was supposed to do. Since my husband started to Bible college *after* we had three children, I never had the privilege of Bible school training. I did take some home correspondence courses while he was getting his training, but I was still woefully unprepared.

I started out trying to teach children. I kept moving through the age groups until I reached the teenagers. I liked this age the best, but I still didn't feel I had found my niche. I had a real desire to work with women. I didn't really know what I was doing, so I just started where I was, with what I knew. I did what I felt God was leading me to do. I started a ladies' Bible study. I told the ladies I had never done this before and asked them to be patient with me as I learned by doing. They were patient with me; God was patient with me; and I found out the reality of Philippians 4:13—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." With God's help and strength, I found out I could minister to women and enjoy it. Before long, I loved it! If I can do it, you can do it.

That was many, many years ago. Over these past

thirty-five years in ministry, I have learned many things about working with women. In my thirty-two years as a pastor's wife, I started many ministries for the ladies of our two churches. In the years of traveling in an itinerate ministry, I have gathered many more ideas as I have observed things that are working in other churches.

In this book I will share my ideas and other resource material for your women's ministries. My prayer is that you can start out with a little more knowledge and instruction than I had. If you are involved in an established women's ministry, I trust you will find some new ideas in this book that will make your ministry more effective in encouraging the ladies you have and reaching new ones for Christ.

CHAPTER 2

Ladies' Bible Studies

IF YOU ARE just starting a ladies' ministry, I would encourage you to start with a ladies' Bible study. Why a Bible study? Primarily because the material is already prepared for you. And if you use the Bible study books published by Regular Baptist Press, the Leader's Guide in the back of each book contains the answers.

To have an interesting and effective ladies' Bible study, you need a good leader and ladies who want to learn more about God's Word. A good leader will know how to draw out comments and discussion from the rest of the group. Therefore, the leader should never do all the talking—unless it is a lecture study.

Scheduling

Time of the year. Some churches have two studies each year. The shorter study is in the fall, from September to before Thanksgiving time. The ladies take a break for the holidays and then start another study in January and continue until late spring or when school is out. Or you could schedule a study from September through May, taking breaks for holidays and special church activities.

Time of the day. Morning Bible studies work well for stay-at-home moms (assuming you provide child care) and retired women. Afternoon studies often work well for moms with school-age children and retired women.



Some churches have two studies: one in the morning and one in the afternoon or evening. Usually both groups study the same subject. One church has an afternoon Bible study and follows that with time for rubber stamping.

Evening studies are necessary for working women. I have had better success, and others have as well, holding the evening study in a home. You usually have a smaller group of women, so a home fosters better fellowship. It is also a good opportunity for working women to invite unsaved friends who wouldn't come to the church.

Length of time. You can plan your study for one hour, one and a half hours, or two hours. Suggestions for using the time are shown below.

1 hour study

10 minutes	Fellowship and prayer
50 minutes	Bible study

1½ hours

1 hour	Bible study
15 minutes	Coffee and fellowship
15 minutes	Prayer time

2 hours

1¼ hours	Bible study
15 minutes	Coffee and fellowship
15 minutes	Prayer time
15 minutes	Get-acquainted time. Have a different lady each week use the 15 minutes to tell something about herself and her family. Or, ask two or three ladies a week to share, using 5 to 7 minutes each.

Possible formats

You can choose from a variety of formats. Here are some suggestions.

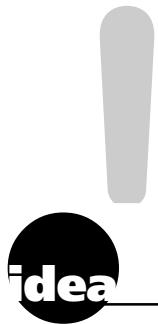
Group discussion. In this type of study the leader introduces the lesson with comments about the lesson and what the group will be studying that day. She leads the study by reading the questions from the book and then asking for answers from the group. A good leader will study the lesson beforehand so she can add comments of interest as the ladies are discussing their

answers to the questions in the Bible study book. Some groups do not try to cover the entire lesson in one week. They stop when the time is up and continue the lesson the next week, starting where they stopped the previous week. Other groups like to stay on a schedule and cover a lesson each week. If they do not finish the lesson, the leader encourages the ladies to finish it on their own at home, or the leader takes the last five or ten minutes to briefly answer all the questions.

Lecture and group discussion. The leader who uses this format would probably want to have a two-hour study. I would suggest a forty-five minute lecture time with a fifteen-minute break before the discussion time. You can allow forty-five minutes for discussion and fifteen minutes for prayer, or use the entire hour for discussion. If the leader uses a lecture time first, she will want to be careful that she does not answer all the questions that will be discussed. The lecture could include additional Biblical background for the day's subject, other issues that relate to the lesson, or a life application that relates to the questions that will be discussed. If you use this type of study, you will probably need to cover all the questions each week or your lecture could become repetitious.

Lecture and small group discussions. This format works well if you have more than twenty ladies in your group. The lecture part of the study would be the same as described above. For the discussion time, the ladies would gather into small groups—four to five in a group and no more than ten. Each group needs a leader who is prepared to lead the discussion. If the group leaders are well prepared and can add thoughts and comments to the discussion, the time will be more interesting for the ladies.

Lecture and small group discussions or special interest groups. This format is the same as the preceding one, with one exception. After the lecture, the ladies can choose to go to a small group to discuss the Bible lesson or go to a special interest group. Special interest



Jeannie Vogel, a pastor's wife, has written a Bible study called First Steps Bible Study. Jeannie says, "We have our First Steps Bible Study for women who are unsaved. People bring interested friends to this study, which is geared to unbelievers. This is an inductive Bible study that is easy to do but also presents the gospel. This has been our fastest growing study, and we have had two classes each session." For more information on this study, you may e-mail Jeannie at sbc@tir.com. —South Baptist Church Flint, Michigan

groups include a weight-loss program, exercise class, craft class, sewing class, computer class, painting class.

Lecture, fellowship time, and small group discussions. You will need to allow two hours for this format. The lecture and small group discussions are the same format as discussed above with a twenty-minute fellowship time between the lecture and discussion. The Heart-to-Heart ministry (presented in chapter 8, page 51), may be used during this time.

Discussion guidelines

Follow these guidelines to keep your discussions moving and interesting.

- Don't discuss controversial issues. Occasionally you will have differences of opinions, but don't let them become divisive.
- Keep the discussion on track; don't get off on unrelated subjects.
- Don't let one lady dominate the discussion time with subjects only she is interested in.
- Try to get as many ladies as possible involved in answering the questions in the lesson.

Bible study resources

Regular Baptist Press publishes a full line of women's studies, including book and topical studies. In the United States, call 1-800-727-4440 for information on study titles. Outside the U.S., contact your distributor. You can also access information about RBP products via the Internet at www.garbc.org/rbp. In addition to these resources, check with your pastor for other reliable Bible study books.

Names

If you want a name other than Ladies' Bible Study, consider these possibilities for a daytime study: Ladies' Daybreak; Morning Break Time; Women of the Word. For evening studies, names include Second Wind; Evening Break; Light after Work.

Other considerations

A ladies' Bible study ministry is effective when a lot of little things are done well. Don't overlook these details.

- *Nursery or child care.* If you want to attract mothers with young children, you must have care available. You need at least two workers regardless of the number of children.
- *Greeters.* Station a woman or two at the door(s) to greet women as they arrive. This sets the tone for all that will follow.
- *Bibles.* Have Bibles available to give to women who do not have them. If you have several unchurched ladies attending the study, you may want to give the page number when you give a Scripture reference. Do not assume all ladies can find Biblical passages.
- *Refreshments.* If your schedule and format include refreshments, ask different women each week to be in charge of the food. Remember that having food usually involves setup and cleanup as well.

