

# *Vibrant* for All Ages!

Is your ministry overflowing with women of one age group...but missing women from another? This section will help you and your leadership team explore fresh ways to reach women of all ages, from those still in their teens all the way to...well...we won't ask how old they are!



fresh!

# Vibrant!

We often make generalizations or form stereotypes about people based on our own experiences. But we also meet people who don't fit into these generalizations or stereotypes. It's important to be aware of our stereotypes, knowing how they limit us, as well as learn how to use some general characteristics of groups of people. The discussions you and your team have related to different age groups and life stages of women will help you evaluate what you're offering, how you can reach women outside of your established group, and how to be freshly relevant to more women in your church and community.

## Let's Talk About Teens

Discuss the following with your team:

- What words would you use to describe teen girls in general?
- What do you love about teen girls? What benefits could they bring to your ministry?
- How can our ministry help teen girls overcome some of the negative stereotypes often assigned to them?
- How can we overcome the stereotypes we have of teen girls?

Your ministry might not focus on teen girls, but all women's ministries need to understand young women. Some churches begin inviting high school girls to join in events and retreats while they're still in these school years to help them transition into adult ministries more easily. Even if you don't include girls at this age, you'll need to be prepared to help them transition and reach them in early adulthood if not before.

## Why Reach Out to Teen Girls?

- A huge number of girls drop out of church as they leave the youth ministry. By giving girls a taste of what's coming after high school, they are more likely to stay involved in church.
- Relationships are difficult for many teenage girls. By creating a place where they can experience healthy relationships, they're more likely to seek and model healthy relationships in their own lives.
- Younger women need guidance to navigate the difficulties of their lives. But they're not likely to reach out to the women who could help them. They need you to reach out to them. You have to make the first step.

**Zest!**

Ninety-six percent of women's ministry leaders say reaching younger women is important to their ministries.





## How Can Our Ministry Reach Out to Teen Girls?

- Make basic connections, like sending a birthday card to each teen girl.
- Involve teen girls in Girls' Nights Out, retreats, or shared-interest groups.
- Multiply your women's ministry by having a connected yet separate teen girls ministry. Use the basic structure we've provided for you here in Fresh & Vibrant, and subscribe to the bimonthly Women's Ministry Leader publication ([group.com/women](http://group.com/women)) for continued resources and ideas for both your women's and girls' ministries.
- Invite one or two younger women to be on your leadership team. Hear from these girls often about what's happening in their lives, what's going on in their schools, and where they need women ahead of them in life to join in.
- Partner with the leadership team from your church's youth ministry. Look for ways to work together in reaching girls.

## Let's Talk About Older Women

This is a bit tricky. No one wants to be an "older" woman! Instead of defining this age group, let's assume older women are women who are older than ourselves! Or perhaps as you discuss the following with your leadership team, you can create your own definition based on your church demographics.

- What words would you use to describe older women in general?
- What do you love about the older women in our church? What benefits could they bring to our ministry?
- How can our ministry help older women overcome some of the negative stereotypes often assigned to them?
- How can we overcome the stereotypes we have of older women?
- How can we reach older women through our women's ministry?

## Why Reach Out to Older Women?

- Older women have a lifetime of experiences to share. Their relationship experiences and variety of skills can encourage and help women of all life stages.
- Older women need relationships and purpose just as much as every other woman! They need to be befriended and find a place to belong where they can continue to grow in faith.
- Many older women are in a stage of life where they have more time to offer. They are likely to be available and can be a great asset to your team.
- In addition to their life experiences, many have long-standing relationships in the church and community. This often allows them to influence key people who can help with reaching the goals of your ministry.

## How Can Our Ministry Reach Out to Older Women?

- Share your ministry's purpose with older women. They likely share the same passion but simply have a different approach!
- Invite older women to become involved in service and ministry.
- Minister to older women. Invite one or more older women to be on your leadership team so you can hear directly from them about their needs, interests, and challenges. These women might open your eyes to the difficulties of navigating a mountain path at a retreat center, to the challenges they face driving at night or in inclement weather, or to the vast wealth of knowledge they have that they can offer others!



*Zest!*

Be sure to protect your church and your children by requiring background checks on all volunteers. Learn more at [group.com/Shepherds-Watch](http://group.com/Shepherds-Watch).

## It's Your Turn!

As a leadership team, identify the group or groups of women you think are missing from your ministry or even from your church. Have a brainstorming session together, using the following questions as a guide.

- What groups of women (such as single, moms, divorced, working) do we stereotype, in either good or bad ways?
- How do our own stereotypes affect our ministries?
- How can we reach women who are at different life stages?
- Why do we want to reach women in these groups?

## About the Child Care *Dilemma*

Choose the best options for your ministry and community. Here are several approaches your team can consider.

- Child care is provided for all women's ministry events and groups. Costs are covered by the church budget, included in event costs, or handled through donations.
- Child care might be provided for all events but not Bible study gatherings, or vice versa. Or child care might be provided only on specific evenings or days.
- Each small group or Bible study group makes its own decision and arrangements concerning child care instead of relying on the church.
- Women find their own child care or a list of possible child care providers is given to women with a child care concern.

## Including Others

### All ages are represented.

One of the best ways to include women of all ages is...to include them! An excellent way to do this is to be sure that each "decade" is represented in your leadership team. This means you should have one woman in her twenties, one in her thirties, one in her forties, and so on. You might want to begin with a woman in her late teens and invite someone from the oldest group of women in your church too!

### All ages are serving.

Invite a woman in her early twenties to lead worship at your retreat instead of asking the organist who does it every year. Or pair a woman in her teens and a woman in her fifties to lead a Bible study together. Or have a younger woman create and maintain a website or social networking page for your group. Look for things women of all ages do well, and invite them to serve there.

### All ages and life stages are included.

Keep in mind that women who are the same age may not be at the same life stage. For example, some women marry young—others wait. Some have children young. Others wait or never have any children. Some have an empty nest when they're only 40; for others this won't happen until they're in their sixties or even older. This means women are going through different things. Different life stages.

If you offer a class for young moms, what will the women who are in that age group who don't have kids do? Will they be left out? Or is there something else that you can offer for them? Are you really only reaching out to one group of women with your offerings? Or are you opening your arms to many women? Think about it!



## So Many Groups...

We've focused a lot on younger women and older women because that's what women's ministry leaders ask us about the most. But there are many other groups that might be represented in your church. Depending on things such as where you live, what kinds of industry are prominent in your area, and the economic structure of your community, there are many other groups of women that you could reach out to intentionally. Consider these groups that might be strong in your area:

- professionals or those in the corporate world
- single moms
- single women without kids
- married women with no kids
- women in the military
- women with family in the military
- retired women
- grandmothers raising grandchildren
- women recovering from crisis

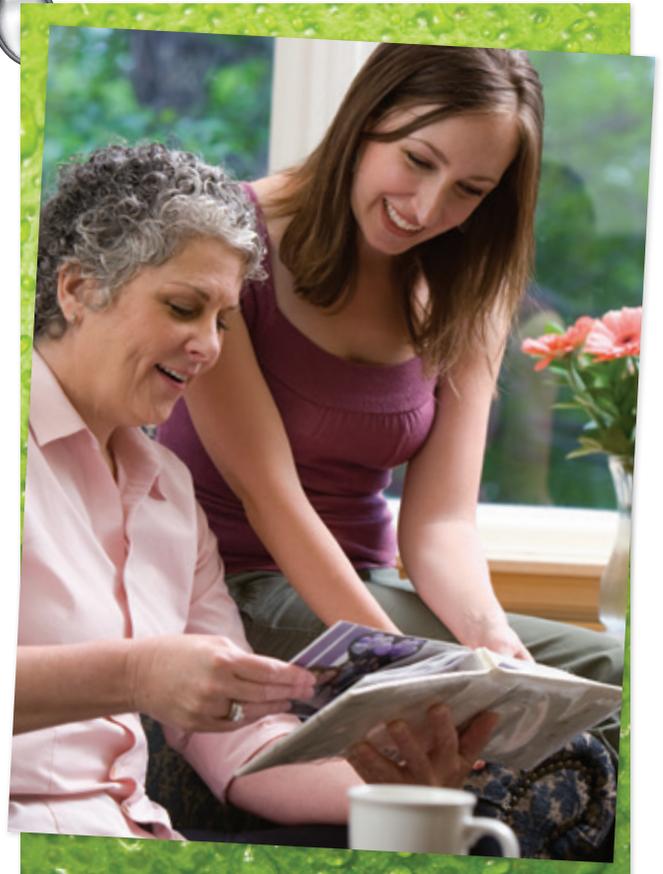
You can imagine this list could get pretty long. We're not suggesting you have to offer something for every group of women in your church. Just the fact that they're all women may be enough for you and your team! But do be aware of the groups of women represented within the walls of your building and the ones who are represented in your community that might come inside your walls if they were welcomed. Again, something to grapple with as a team!



## Lifestyle Mentoring

We're huge fans of *lifestyle* mentoring instead of a mentoring *program*. What is *lifestyle mentoring*? In *That Makes Two of Us* (Group Publishing, Inc.), authors Connie Witt and Cathi Workman talk about how they share life together. Everyday life, like shopping, cooking, and walking. Mentoring can happen when you simply go out for coffee, catch a movie, drive to the airport together, visit a favorite store, or walk around your neighborhood. Just think of anything two women can do together. Watch for lifestyle connections with other women. It's not time-consuming or expensive. And it's fun!

Recall a woman who impacted your life and helped shape you into the woman you are today.



## Myths of Mentoring

Here are some highlights from *That Makes Two of Us* to help you start thinking about how lifestyle mentoring might work for women in your church. If this gets your group excited, we recommend you pick up a copy of the book and get started!

**Myth: I must be smart.**

**Truth:** You must be willing to share what you already know. God has taught you tons of stuff along your journey. That's what you must be willing to share with whomever God puts in your path. So what if you don't have an IQ of 180? To be honest, most of the world wouldn't be able to connect with you if you did!

**Myth: It's very time-consuming.**

**Truth:** You've got to start seeing your life and your daily schedule as an avenue to build relationships. You don't have to add anything to your schedule. The way to think about mentoring the next generation is to *show* them, not *tell* them. They want to see Jesus in your life. They want to see you walk the walk, not just talk the talk. So take them along with you. Take them through life with you.

**Myth: Younger women don't want to hang out with me!**

**Truth:** This is totally untrue! Because of the way this generation was raised and the pattern of the previous generation, there is a *longing* to have the influence of older women in their lives. There are so many young women who have little or no relationship with their moms. Or even if they have great relationships with their moms, a lot of the time they aren't living in the same cities or even states where their moms are.

**Myth: I need to know the Bible better.**

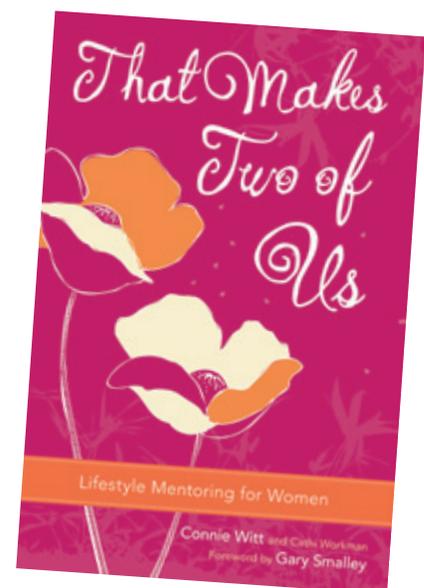
**Truth:** You need to be willing and ready to share what you've already learned. Yes, we all need to continue growing and learning, but to decide not to invest in the next generation because we aren't Billy Graham isn't really acceptable. Think about it: Do you know the Bible better now than you did last year? What about

now compared to two years ago? Or five years ago? If you've attended one or two church services, the answer should be yes! So share what you know.

**Myth: I don't have any curriculum.**

**Truth:** Your life is your curriculum. God wants to use your experiences...your successes...your failures... your hurts...your life. You have plenty of material to use to impact the life of someone else.

(Adapted from *That Makes Two of Us*, Group Publishing, Inc.)



**Group**

**Fresh & Vibrant Women's Ministry**

**Vibrant for All Ages!**

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