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# Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level



25 activities, experiences, and ideas  
to deepen faith and relationships



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## Introduction

# The Next Level of Women's Ministry

*By Natalie Lederhouse*

**W**omen's roles have drastically changed over the past 50 years—in the home, workplace, and church. Not too many years ago, most women would be expected to marry young, bear children, raise them, all awhile managing the household. Roles have changed, given that more than half of our workforce is female. Today's women often juggle several different roles: mother, worker, caregiver, wife, student, and more! This surge of different roles has made it more difficult to minister to women in the church because their needs are now as diverse as their roles are. Although this new demographic of Christian women has unique challenges, it is exciting to be able to cast aside the notion of "one size fits all" women's ministry.

## Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level

### The Next Level of Women's Ministry

We need to take our women's ministry programs to the next level in order to reach today's generation of women more effectively. Although each woman has a unique perspective and trajectory in the church, we are unified in many ways. **Women yearn for authenticity and vulnerability.** We **thirst and crave relationships** that are deep, meaningful, and encouraging—all the while desiring to deepen and live out our faith in a way that is honoring to God. We need to find a way that combines both elements—faith and relationship—and taps into the richness that comes from having many different walks of life.

We believe that the best way to accomplish these goals is through dialogue. Use this resource as a conversation guide in your circles of friends or women's ministry team. We start with Kelli B. Trujillo's article "Women's Ministry: Don't Judge a Tea by Its Doily" and offer three Reflect questions to start discussion on different ways you can spiritually challenge the women in your life. Next you'll find 25 activities, experiences, and ideas that will deepen both faith and relationships. We know it takes a lot of time, energy, and planning to create meaningful events where women can connect and grow spiritually, so we organized our ideas into 4 categories: ideas to help you grow in your relationship with God, in your relationship with other women, in knowledge and theology, and ideas to grow your community. Whether you're a women's ministry leader or someone who wants to find new, unique ways to build your relationships and faith, this resource is for you!

Blessings,

*Natalie Lederhouse*

Women's Retreat Coordinator at First Baptist Church of Wheaton, IL, and  
Editorial Coordinator for TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.



## Leader's Guide

# Using "Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level" for a group study

"Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level" can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.
2. Consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material.
3. Alternately, you might consider reading the article and ideas aloud together.
4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.
5. When working through the Reflect questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.
6. End the session in prayer.



# Women's Ministry: Don't Judge a Tea by Its Doily

Not all churches underchallenge women.

By Kelli B. Trujillo

Like an enthusiastic bobblehead, I found myself rambunctiously nodding in agreement as I read Amy Simpson's "**A Challenge to the Chronically Underchallenged.**" I resonate with Simpson's passion for the church to more fully empower women to actively minister to others and to address the world's needs. Like Simpson, I bemoan the tendency for women to be relegated to nice, cutesy, tame little roles in the church. Part of me hollered out an enthusiastic "Amen!" of agreement.

But I also found myself nodding in agreement with another sentiment—a commenter who responded to Simpson this way: "I would simply have to say: 'Come to my church. There's plenty for you to do in ministry and you would be most welcome to do it.'"

## Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level

### Women's Ministry: Don't Judge a Tea by Its Doily

Though I concur with Simpson's overall sentiment, not all churches underchallenge women. In fact, I've regularly felt profoundly challenged by my own church.

Recently I've been challenged to:

- **Stop traffic.** One friend, Debi, has led the charge in drawing our church's attention to human trafficking. Debi taught a class on the subject, continues to raise awareness through conversation and bringing in speakers, and has helped connect our church with a broader network of organizations concerned about this issue. Church members were actively involved in anti-sex-trafficking work during the Super Bowl in our city last year; as a result of the efforts of many Christians working together, several young women were rescued from forced prostitution and returned to their families.
- **Live justly.** I know there is poverty in our city, but it wasn't until recently that I learned devastating details about how tough things really are in a specific area of Indianapolis. I learned these specifics from Mechelle, who shared with the congregation about her involvement in a Christian ministry that provides basic necessities, tutoring, encouragement to young moms, and much more in a struggling part of Indianapolis. I, along with the rest of the congregation, was challenged to pray about getting involved. I've been similarly challenged to grow in active justice and compassion work by the examples of women like Shirley who volunteers at a downtown homeless shelter and Emily who ministers at a crisis pregnancy center, helping vulnerable women discover a "choice" other than abortion.
- **Go global.** What started as a small ministry to a specific group of immigrants living near our church has now ballooned into a full-scale program. On Tuesday nights, the classrooms are brimming full with immigrants from 32 different countries who are learning English and building cross-cultural friendships. Dawn heads up this ministry, galvanizing our church to love the world right in our backyard, while Anna mobilizes church volunteers to care for the immigrants' children. The challenge to live and love globally also comes regularly from missionaries—from women like Kim, Emily, and Elena who are willing to forego the comfort of home and answer God's call abroad. I'm inspired by their work:

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training indigenous church leaders, providing medical care to AIDS victims, offering job training and friendship to those who've escaped the sex-trafficking industry, and more.

These are just three of the many ways I've been challenged in my church and women's ministry recently—and I bet you can think of similar examples from your own.

Like many GenXers and younger, I'm not as "into" traditional women's ministry events (such as a tea, a brunch, or a craft-making experience) as my older counterparts may be. And as much recent discussion online reveals (such as [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), a traditional approach to women's ministry can leave some women feeling frustrated, disconnected, and underchallenged.

But in my experience, surprisingly, it's often when I've participated in more "traditional" events that might not be my preferred cup of tea (pun intended) that I've been profoundly convicted and inspired in my walk with Christ. The power hasn't come from a cutesy craft or a pleasant program—it's come from the people I've been privileged to interact with. As I've gotten to know women who are different from me, I've been both blessed and challenged by their life stories: A physician who established a hospital in a conflict-torn region of the Middle East. A retired missionary who described the adventurous life of jungle aviation and showed me a video of herself skydiving. The countless women with more "normal" life stories who've convicted me by their examples of perseverance through tragedy, passionate evangelism, grace for the hurting, wisdom for family relationships, and devoted commitment to the gospel and the church.

Sometimes the church's biggest challenges for today's women are hidden in surprising places—like in the lives of seniors from whom we can learn an awful lot. If we value learning from older women and building inter-generational fellowship, we must be willing to accept and value other women's interests (such as traditional women's ministry events), even if these interests are vastly different from our own. (Likewise, a healthy church will **recognize the unique and diverse needs** of younger women as well.) So does the church at large underchallenge women? Probably yes. But does yours? Does mine? Not necessarily.

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### Women's Ministry: Don't Judge a Tea by Its Doily

I'm thankful for the challenging examples set by women in my church. Spiritually-speaking, these women keep me on my toes! And among all the lessons I've learned from these women is this one: Don't judge a women's tea by its doily—because powerful ministry can take place in many contexts, even those that may appeal more to one generation than another.

**Kelli B. Trujillo** is a regular contributor for TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN and the author of the new **Flourishing Faith** series. You can find her at [www.kellitrujillo.com](http://www.kellitrujillo.com) or on Twitter (@kbtrujillo). This article was published in August 2012 on [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com).

## Reflect

- *What stands out to you most from this article? Why?*
- *How have you been challenged by your church recently?*
- *What areas of new ministry would you like the women at your church to be encouraged to engage with? Brainstorm different ways to get involved.*



# Need a few fresh ideas to connect women in your church?

Try some of these!

## Ideas to help you grow in your relationship with God

***1. Host a prayer night.*** Depending on the number of women who attend, break up into smaller groups of 8 to 10 and pray through topics that are important to your church's mission: praises and adoration of God, evangelistic efforts, spiritual growth for your church, community needs, biblical justice issues, confession, and more. Create a structured outline of the time you want to spend on each topic. For example, if your group is meeting for 90 minutes, you might want to spend 15 minutes on 4 topics and allow the first and last portions to start and wrap up the evening. You might want to prepare handouts with prewritten Scripture or liturgy to pray through as a group. Be sure to offer a variety of ways to pray throughout the evening.

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Consider these methods of prayer:

- **Conversational prayer.** This is also known as "popcorn" prayer. Each prayer is only a few sentences long and doesn't have to cover an entire topic.
- **Liturgical prayer.** Take time to pray through written prayers by others in church history, or pray through The Book of Common Prayer.
- **Praying Scripture.** Pray or sing through portions of Scripture like the Lord's Prayer, psalms, responsive readings, or doxologies, and more. Be sure to allow enough time for the group to listen and reflect on the passages used.
- **Prayer walking.** Spend time walking through an environment that your group is concerned about. For example, you could walk through your church or downtown area praying for the needs and concerns present.
- **Visual prayer.** Beforehand create a presentation of several different images that will prompt prayer. Spend a few minutes on each slide, allowing time for several people to pray out loud. Once there is a break, move to the next slide.

**2. Host a testimony night.** Women don't always want to hear from the latest celebrity woman or from someone who appears to have it all together. Select 2 to 3 women from your congregation who are willing to share their faith journey with a larger group. The testimonies can be as simple as sharing their story and wisdom they might have for other women going through what they've already experienced. Be sure to meet with the women who are sharing their testimony during the planning stages to ask them to include a spiritual emphasis—how God has helped them through or how he has revealed his presence to them amidst the storm. Allow at least 10 minutes after each testimony for questions and reflection. Here are some questions that you might want to ask:

- What has God been teaching you recently?
- What are you doing now to become the person you long to be?
- What suggestions would you have for us about how to celebrate and share God's work in our lives with those around us? What has worked in your own life?

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### Activities, Experiences, and Ideas

**3. Plan a half-day spiritual retreat.** Choose a location that is within 30 minutes of your church where you can spend a Saturday morning together from 8 A.M. to 12 P.M.—maybe a nice hotel, retreat center, church, or even a nearby park. Begin at 8 A.M. with a continental breakfast and fellowship for the first half hour. Then spend the next 30 minutes singing and worshipping together. After worship, send each woman off to a location where she can spend time alone with God for an hour. Be sure to include a guide with several Bible passages and questions for women to focus on if they want more direction. At the end of their time alone, gather into groups of 3 to 4 to share for 30 minutes what each woman learned or reflected on. Here are some examples of questions and passages you might want to include on the guide to pass out to the women:

- Am I more interested in serving God or in serving myself by using him?
- Could I be satisfied with God and nothing else?
- Am I more interested in what God thinks or what others think?
- Do I love God because he first loved me, or is my love based on convenience or manipulation?
- **Isaiah 40:27–31**
- **Psalms 139**
- **Colossians 3:15–20**

After women are done sharing, have 30 to 45 minutes for teaching or for sharing an inspiring, devotional talk. Afterwards, eat lunch together. If your church doesn't have money budgeted to cater a meal in, ask women beforehand to bring a dish to share.

**4. Host a worship night.** Plan a two-hour worship session for an evening that utilizes a variety of different types of worship. The term *worship* can refer to anything that we do that honors or glorifies God for who he is. Choose a theme for the evening—maybe redemption, identity, calling, gratitude, Christ, or a specific Scripture passage—and then choose songs, Scripture, and liturgies that relate to your theme and that lift up God. Be sure to include a variety of disciplines that lead to worship like journaling, liturgy, communion, and more.

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**5. Host a "pie and praise" night.** Provide several different types of pie for women to eat while they share praises from their life—what God is doing in their life and what they're thankful for. This can be a one-hour event.

### Ideas to help you grow in your relationships with other women

**6. Create a summer mentoring program.** Not only will a mentoring program help your women grow closer to God as they learn from their mentor, but they will also create a connection with their mentor that is meaningful and encouraging. This can be a 6 to 8 week program where there are 5 to 6 mentors (usually women who are 35 and older) who mentor a group of 10 to 12 young women (usually women who are between the ages of 18 to 35, although women older than 35 can also be the mentorees!). Meet once a week in the evening to share a meal and grow spiritually together. Spend your time in a variety of different ways: Serve together. Discuss marriage advice or parenting wisdom. Discuss a great book together. Share what God is teaching you and how you're growing in your faith. Learn different ways to be hospitable. Learn how to make simple favors or to decorate a table with what you already own. Share your go-to recipes that are easy to make for a large group, or share skills that help you engage a large group of people who might not know each other very well. The spectrum can range from learning practical knowledge and skills to being completely relational and discussion-based. Women learn from both ends of the spectrum, and the options are endless.

**7. Play paintball or laser tag.** Some women love being athletic and playing sports. If cost is an issue, choose a sport that doesn't cost any money—like kickball or ultimate Frisbee. Choose a time and a location and play your heart out.

**8. Host a game night.** Have each woman bring a salty or a sweet snack to share and play a combination of board games and group games. A great group game is charades. However, make it a bit more entertaining by tearing up slips of paper and having each woman present write her own word or phrase that she wants the other team to act out—without speaking! It can range from anything as simple as the name of a person or celebrity to "Tickle-Me-Elmo takes over the world." (Trust me. It has been done and successfully guessed!) Break up into two teams and act out the other team's phrases. It usually is

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the most fun when you don't keep score and you give the guessing team as much time as is needed for the phrase to be guessed. This is a time to focus on building relationships—not necessarily winning (although that can be nice too!).

**9. Run or walk a local 5k together.** There are lots of opportunities to run races or walk for a cause in your own community. Research some local races and charities, and together choose which cause you want to support by being active together.

**10. Create a babysitting swap.** Make a list of parents and their contact information from either your church or Sunday school class roster who are willing to offer four hours of complimentary babysitting in exchange for free babysitting of their own children on a different day. This works well if families can usually plan ahead at least a few weeks and are willing to sacrifice a weekend evening every so often—remembering that it will be their turn next to get free babysitting.

**11. Plan a “beach day” or “a day in the city.”** This is a great activity to include the whole family, as well as any of your non-Christian friends. You know your local area best, so pick an attraction and spend the afternoon or the whole day with your family and friends.

**12. Use social media to stay in contact.** Create social media accounts for your women's ministry (such as **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and **Instagram**). You could also create a simple blog or website for your group. Make a few of your leaders administrators and encourage them to post Scripture, events, prayer requests, newsletters, and more on the account to keep women connected and aware of women's ministry events. Be sure to allow comments so that women can respond and create a conversation. Using social media helps women stay connected—especially those who are quite busy with work or parenting and may not be free to attend many women's ministry events.

**13. Host a movie night.** There are lots of movies that have deeper themes and concepts than in the main storyline. Take two to three hours on a Saturday afternoon or evening to watch and discuss a movie while eating your favorite movie theater snack together. Feel free to make this a family event by choosing a family-friendly movie and including questions that your kids can help answer. CHRISTIANITY TODAY offers several reviews for free, and

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you can purchase a discussion guide to direct your conversation after the movie. You can locate several discussion guides [here](#) (at <http://biblestudies.stores.yahoo.net/modigu.html>), and the free reviews are located [here](#) at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/movies/reviews/>. Each movie guide helps you evaluate the movie through the lens of Scripture. Below are a few suggestions of movies you might want to consider watching and discussing as a group.

- *Les Misérables*. The movie discussion guide is located [here](#), and CHRISTIANITY TODAY's review is located [here](#).
- *Iron Man*. The movie discussion guide is located [here](#), and CHRISTIANITY TODAY's review is located [here](#).
- *End of the Spear*. The movie discussion guide is located [here](#), and CHRISTIANITY TODAY's review is located [here](#).
- *Courageous*. The movie discussion guide is located [here](#), and CHRISTIANITY TODAY's review is located [here](#).

**14. Plan a Mom's Night Out.** This can be an ongoing event that takes place anywhere from once a year to once a month! Provide activities and childcare for all children, infant through high school, during this evening. Along with trained and approved childcare providers from the church, you can even invite the youth group to help. Women can be treated to a gourmet dinner prepared by volunteers from the church and served at tables set with linen tablecloths, real china, glasses, and silverware (or just fancy paper, plates, and plasticware!). After the meal, provide an opportunity for women to choose between a parenting class, an opportunity for individual prayer, or discussion groups that focus on relevant topics and conclude with prayer. You can also invite the women to "shop" through a vast array of donated household goods such as detergent, soap, lotions, diapers, prepackaged snacks, and more. (Be sure to collect these items as donations beforehand!) The shopping, dinner, and childcare can all be a gift to the women. If it's not financially possible to gift this event, then charge an entrance fee that will cover the costs of everything you can't get donated.

**15. Host a summer book club.** There are a lot of great books that can drive you to the Word and discover new insights. Get a group of 6 to 12 women who want to meet together weekly to discuss a specific book. Lots of books now

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come with discussion questions at the end of each chapter. If the book you choose doesn't, come up with your own questions. *What did you like about this chapter? What would you add to the author's thoughts on . . .?* It only takes about 4 to 5 good questions to fill up a full hour. The books you choose can be either fiction or nonfiction. If you choose a fiction book, your questions might look different from those you would ask if it were nonfiction. *How does this character reflect Christian principles? What would you have done differently if you were this character? Why?*

Here is a list of potential books to consider:

- *She's Got Issues* by Nicole Unice
- *Real Simplicity* by Rozanne and Randy Frazee
- *Love & Salt* by Amy Andrews and Jessica Mesman Griffith
- *The Busy Mom's Guide to Spiritual Survival* by Kelli B. Trujillo
- *The Emotionally Healthy Woman* by Geri Scazzero
- *Hearing God* by Dallas Willard
- *The Complete Stories* by Flannery O'Connor
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

### Ideas to help you grow in knowledge and theology

**16. Host or attend local seminars for “theological education.”** Most Christian colleges or universities host seminars that are open to the public. If you're not located near a Christian college, check with large local churches in the area—they often host small seminars or workshops at least once a year that you can register for. Otherwise, there are several online seminars you can listen to as a group.

**17. Attend a conference together.** Whether it's a local conference or one located in a nearby state, give women an opportunity to grow and take time for themselves by attending a conference together. Depending on interest, some conferences offer group discounts. Consider these possibilities:

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- Catalyst, [catalystconference.com](http://catalystconference.com)
- Gateway Conference, [gatewayconference.com](http://gatewayconference.com)
- The Global Leadership Summit, [willowcreek.com/events/leadership](http://willowcreek.com/events/leadership)
- Hearts at Home, [hearts-at-home.org](http://hearts-at-home.org)
- MOPS Convention (Mothers of Preschoolers), [mops.org](http://mops.org)
- Passion Conference, [268generation.com](http://268generation.com)
- RightNow, [rightnowconferences.org](http://rightnowconferences.org)
- Women of Faith, [womenoffaith.com/events](http://womenoffaith.com/events)

**18. Facilitate a 6-week short Bible study.** Not everyone has time for a 16-week Bible study, so give women a shorter option. Either choose a topic for all 6 weeks, or choose individual studies that can be done in a single week—that way if someone has to miss an evening, she doesn't have to feel like she will be lost in the next week's discussion. TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN offers several new single-session studies that can be strung together to make a cohesive study. They are located at our online store here: <http://todayschristianwomanstore.com/newtcwbist.html>. Here are a few of the many options you would find:

- **Hope for Your Hurting Marriage:** *Perspective to make it through the rough spots*
- **Worship with All You've Got:** *What it takes to fully engage worship*
- **Sexual Temptation:** *Attraction can sneak up on us! How to respond in a godly way.*
- **Sabbath Rest:** *Taking a break actually helps you grow.*
- **The Mom-Kid Connection:** *Strengthening your mother-child bond is a powerful way to pass on your faith.*

Ideally, you want a group with 6 to 12 people. You'll want few enough that you can really engage with the whole group on your Bible passage, but not too many that if everyone talked for 5 minutes you would be there for several hours. Be sure to include enough time for snacks and prayer.

## Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level

### Activities, Experiences, and Ideas

**19. Audit a college class with a friend.** If you have a local college near you, talk to its admissions department to get information on auditing a class. It doesn't have to be a theology class either—there are countless ways to learn more about God and God's world through various fields of study! Your options are almost endless: art, photography, journalism, accounting, personal finance, macroeconomics, tennis, ethics, and more! Typically, the cost to audit a class is significantly less than if you took it for credit, and you won't be required to complete all of the homework and papers—although if you did, I'm sure it would be a great opportunity to solidify what you're learning and the issues you're thinking through.

**20. Host a discussion night.** Women desire to wrestle and talk through tough, theological issues. Plan a few hours where women can feel safe and welcome to share their thoughts and questions. Do not necessarily expect to come away from the evening with a concrete answer for what to do regarding a complex issue or topic.. Instead, the goal is to foster a conversation that encourages women to think deeper about current issues. Begin by sharing a handout that shows biblical references for why each side has their specific view. You will only need a few questions before the conversation will take off. Be sure to facilitate the discussion and try to create an environment where the women don't have to be defensive. Here are several topics/issues you can choose from to plan your evening around; choose one topic per discussion night.

- Homosexuality
- Abortion
- Environmental Stewardship
- Women's Leadership Roles
- Creation & Evolution

Leaders should use solid, biblically-grounded books to frame their discussion.

## Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level

### Activities, Experiences, and Ideas

#### Ideas to help your community grow

**21. Do a monthly or quarterly service project.** This would make a great family event and an opportunity to invite non-Christian friends. Research your local area to find organizations that welcome volunteers. Have sign-ups for different days and times, and try to limit each group to the number of volunteers the organization recommends. The more people who volunteer, the more opportunities to serve! Here is a list of some types of areas or service projects to look into:

- Food pantry
- Homeless shelter
- Pregnancy center
- Animal shelter
- **Samaritan's Purse**
- **Feed My Starving Children**
- Adopt a road or do pick up trash for an afternoon
- Plan a drive for coats or school supplies, or make blankets, little stuffed animals, and other items that you can donate to children's hospitals.

**22. Volunteer at your local community center.** Community centers are always looking for men and women to tutor or mentor students, and it's a great opportunity to invite your non-Christian friends to make an impact in their community as well.

**23. Camp outside through the night for homelessness awareness.** Involve the whole family in this event. Imagine you were homeless. What would you be able to carry around with you? That's all you get to bring for this event—maybe a jacket and a few other belongings that you can carry. Turn this into a community fundraiser by taking pledges from people for each individual who camps out from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. Donate the collected money to your local homeless shelter or food pantry.

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**24. Create a homework club.** Work with your church or partner with a local community center or non-profit organization to create a homework club where children can meet for an hour, one to two days per week during the school year to get help with their homework. This ministry can be especially helpful if you work with kids who are English language learners. Make sure you have enough committed volunteers to keep it running throughout the whole school year.

**25. Get regularly involved with a local organization against human sex trafficking.** Organizations are popping up all around the country to help stop sex trafficking. If there's not a local organization near you, consider shopping online at stores whose profits go to help stop sex trafficking or whose merchandise is created by women who have been rescued from sex trafficking. Here are a few online stores:

- Not For Sale Store, [notforsalestore.org](http://notforsalestore.org)
- Women at Risk, International, [warchestboutique.com](http://warchestboutique.com)
- NightLight, [store.nightlightinternational.com](http://store.nightlightinternational.com)
- The A21 Campaign, [thea21campaign.org](http://thea21campaign.org)
- Made By Survivors, [madebysurvivors.com](http://madebysurvivors.com)
- Polaris Project, [polarisproject.org](http://polarisproject.org)

## Take Your Women's Ministry to the Next Level

### Additional Resources

## Additional Resources

Read more about the desires and needs of 21st century women in the Church

### **Kari Jobe on Worship and Women's Ministry**

from **TodaysChristianWoman.com**

### **The Longings of a New Generation of Women**

from **GiftedforLeadership.com**

### **What Women's Ministry Can Be**

from **TodaysChristianWoman.com**

### **Why It's Your Job to Break the Women's Ministry Stereotype**

from **Her.meneutics**

### **Women's Ministry that Works**

from **GiftedforLeadership.com**

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