



# STATE *of* MINISTRY TO WOMEN

---

*It's Working*

Lifeway<sup>®</sup> research  
Insights Report

For decades, women have been [more likely to attend church](#) than men. Although this gap has been shrinking in recent years, it remains likely that more than half of your congregation are women. As sisters in Christ first and foremost, the women in our churches deserve our attention and investment. And for many, dedicated ministry to women is an effective tool for equipping women in their Christian walk. According to Lifeway Research's [State of Ministry to Women study](#), ministry leaders and women churchgoers believe ministry to women is working in their congregations, but both see opportunities for improvement.

**Lifeway Research surveyed 1,001 evangelical and Black Protestant female churchgoers in the U.S., along with 842 women's ministry leaders for the State of Ministry to Women study.**

Lifeway has been equipping churches for ministry to women for nearly 30 years. As churches navigate a new, post-COVID season of ministry, this research serves as a tool for churches to gauge how well they're serving women. Based on this evaluation of ministry to women from women churchgoers and women's ministry leaders, churches can better prepare to effectively reach a new generation of women. This study highlights some reasons for celebration and identifies areas where there's more work to be done.

The research reveals churches that don't have an organized ministry to women have a significant opportunity to make a change and help women spiritually—simply by launching a ministry that's specific for women. For these churches, it's critical leaders find and equip a woman to begin offering relational, Bible-focused, relevant activities for women in the church.

For churches that already have a women's ministry, this research highlights some areas of possible improvement. One of the greatest opportunities comes from women attending the first time, because participating in women's ministry causes many women to be more interested in activities that help them spiritually. How can your church begin better serving and equipping women?

While acknowledging areas that need more investment, both leaders and those involved see value in their church's ministry to women. And pastors and other church leaders have a role to play in maximizing the impact of ministry to women. The actionable insights included throughout this report will help you know how.

**Scott McConnell,**  
Executive Director of Lifeway Research

# Key Findings

» **Women feel valued in the church**

Among women who attend church once a month or more, 96% of churchgoing women say their church values women, including 80% who strongly agree.

» **The church invests in and equips women**

Fewer women churchgoers believe their church invests in and equips women. While 90% agree their church invests in and equips women, only 63% strongly agree.

» **Churches need specific ministry to women**

For around 2 in 3 churchgoing women (63%), their congregation has an organized women's ministry. And another 21% say their church has activities specifically for women.

» **Women's ministry brings value to the church**

Churchgoing women say having a women's ministry brings value to the church that would not exist without this ministry—helping women have strong relationships with other women (68%), providing opportunities to be refreshed and restored spiritually and emotionally (65%), and providing a place to ask questions and openly discuss topics of faith (58%).

» **Women's ministry leaders need more support**

Most (94%) women's ministry leaders say their ministry regularly receives support from their pastor, but only 5% of women's ministry leaders are planning alongside church staff.

» **Most women's ministry leaders are volunteers**

Women's ministry leaders lead sacrificially, with more than 4 in 5 (83%) serving as volunteers or unpaid staff members.

» **Women are called to ministry**

Those leading ministry to women in their churches are leading out of obedience to God, with more than 3 in 4 women (77%) saying they lead because they feel called.

» **Discipleship is the top priority for ministry to women**

Most women's ministry leaders say discipling women and encouraging their walks with Christ is the top priority for their ministries (57%).

# WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

---

Seeing value in  
ministry to women

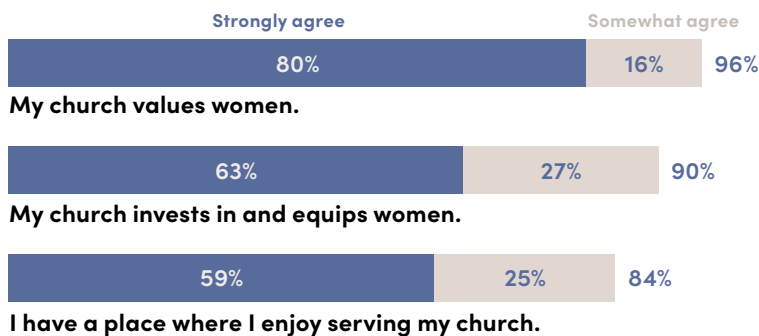
*“I feel that women’s ministry is a vital part of our church’s health because it fosters relationships among women while also strengthening our knowledge of God’s Word.”*



# Church Involvement and Spiritual Disciplines

*“I love gathering with other believers, especially women, so we can equip and encourage one another in our Christian walk.”*

Among women who attend church once a month or more, 96% say their church values women, including 80% who agree strongly. Fewer, however, believe their church invests in and equips women or say they have a place where they enjoy serving in their congregation. While 90% agree their church invests in and equips women, 63% strongly agree. Additionally, 84% of women churchgoers have somewhere they enjoy serving in their church, with 59% who strongly agree.



Most of the women are involved in their congregation beyond merely attending worship services. Two in 3 (66%) are involved in some type of small group or class for adults at least once during a typical month, including 28% who say they attend four times or more.

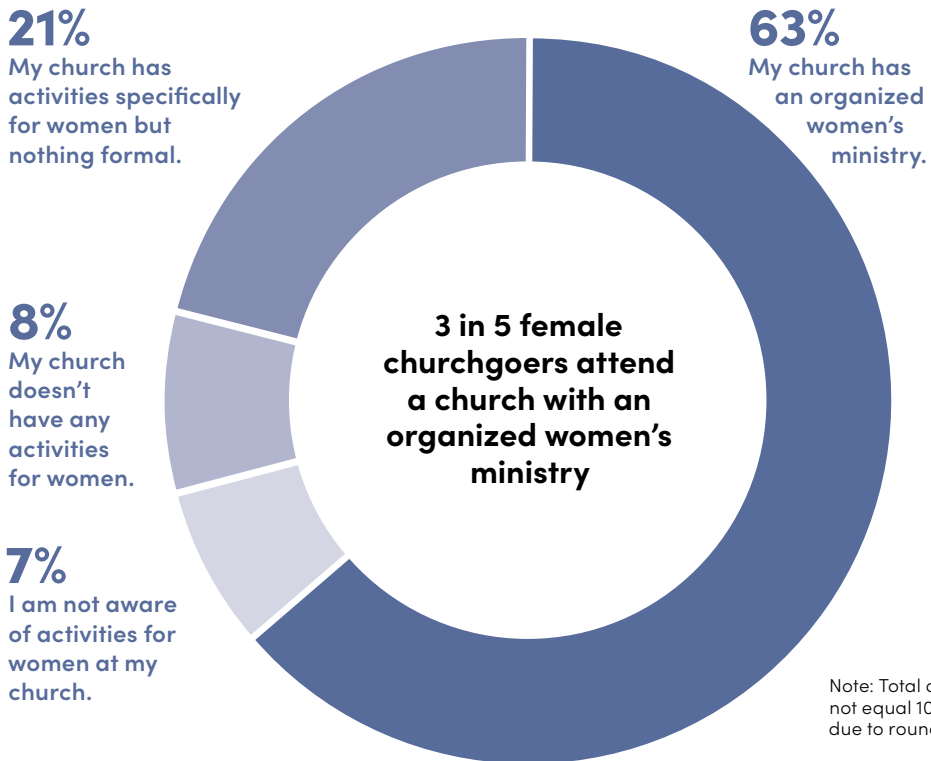
*“While women are positive about their churches, 1 in 5 indicate there is room for improvement in how well their church values them. Even more women indicate their church could improve in proactively investing in women, with 37% withholding the highest rating for how well their church equips women.”*

— Scott McConnell,  
Executive Director  
of Lifeway Research

# Women's Ministry Offerings and Opportunities

*“Women’s ministry makes me want to study the Bible and pray more. It is also helpful in developing lasting relationships with other women of faith.”*

For around 2 in 3 churchgoing women (63%), their congregation has an organized women’s ministry. And another 21% say their church has activities specifically for women but nothing formal. Few say their church doesn’t have any activities for women (8%) or that they aren’t aware of any (7%).



# How to start a women's ministry in your church

## 1. Pray

The Lord always provides the right people in the right timing and works out the details when we live surrendered and sensitive to His call. Begin to pray now about this ministry opportunity and invite a group of trusted believers to join you.

## 2. Identify a leader

If you're a pastor or church leader, try to identify a woman in your church who you think would be interested in directing this ministry. Is there a woman who already shows godly influence in the church? Is there someone who is already teaching women effectively or has strong relational gifts connecting women across various ages and stages of life? Have a conversation with her to gauge her interest and present your vision. If she isn't interested, she may know of someone else who'd be a good fit.

If you're a woman in a local church, consider whether you're the woman to begin the ministry or if there's someone you know in your church who has these abilities. Begin these discussions with her or with your church leadership to see the feasibility of taking the next step.

## 3. Equip a leader

As important as choosing a ministry leader is, equipping her is equally vital. As her pastor, provide her with helpful training opportunities, clear responsibilities and expectations, and ways to provide feedback.

## 4. Create a ministry mission statement

When creating a mission statement for a women's ministry, clear and concise is best.

## 5. Build a team

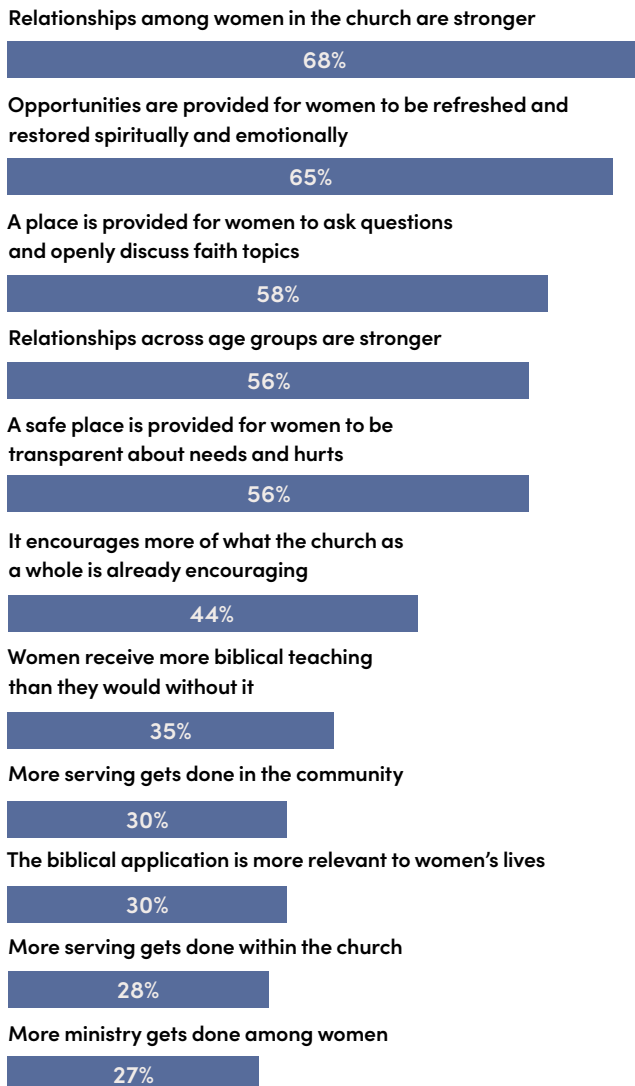
You want your leadership team to reflect the ladies you are serving in your church. When looking for women to oversee the various aspects of the ministry, look for different-aged women with diverse skills, passions, and spiritual and natural giftings. Identify the interests and abilities of women in your church that may give them the confidence they need to step into a leadership role.

## 7. Go!

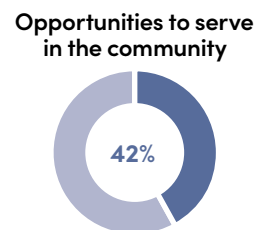
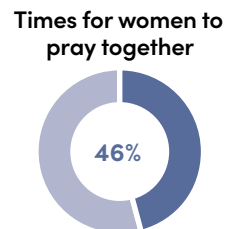
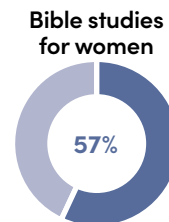
You can do this! Step up and step out in what God has called and continues to call you to do.

Among those with some type of women’s activities at their church, female churchgoers point to the value that comes from having a women’s ministry, including stronger relationships among women in the church (68%), opportunities for women to be refreshed and restored spiritually and emotionally (65%), a place to ask questions and openly discuss faith topics (58%), stronger cross-generational relationships (56%), and a safe place for women to be transparent about needs and hurts (56%).

## What value does having a women’s ministry bring to your church that would not exist without it?



Almost 9 in 10 women say their church conducted some events in the past year to disciple women and encourage their walk with Christ. Churchgoers were most likely to say their church offered Bible studies for women (57%), times for women to pray together (46%), and opportunities to serve in the community (42%).





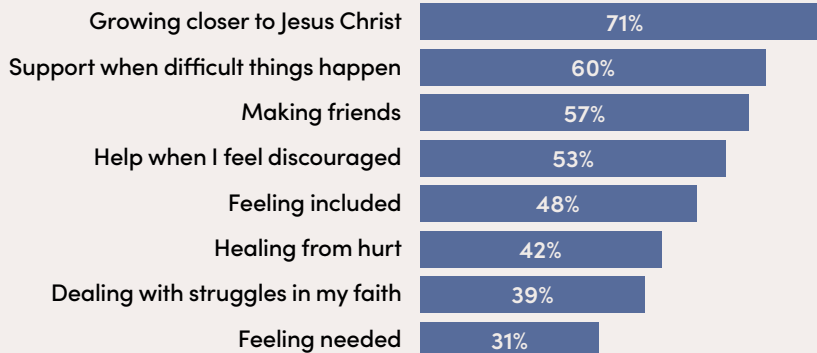
# Personal Help

*“Women’s ministry helps strengthen my walk with Jesus and gives me a purpose in the church.”*

Female churchgoers see ministry to women as a way to meet a host of spiritual and personal needs, and most say the church has been meeting those needs.

The top need women say they’ve been hoping women’s ministry activities in their church would help them with personally is growing closer to Jesus (71%). Most also want support when difficult things happen (60%), the ability to make friends (57%), and help when they feel discouraged (53%). A sizeable percentage also say they want their church’s women’s ministry to help them feel included (48%), heal from hurt (42%), deal with struggles in their faith (39%), and feel needed (31%).

## What needs have you been hoping women’s ministry activities in your church would help you with personally?



Among the women who identified each of those areas, at least 7 in 10 say their church has offered activities that have helped them with that need, including 79% who said their church offered an activity that helped them grow closer to Jesus.

**“A large majority of women are getting help from their church in the areas where they need it, but between 21% and 28% of women indicate specific needs that have not been addressed. This is more likely to occur in churches that do not have an organized ministry to women or activities specifically for women.”**

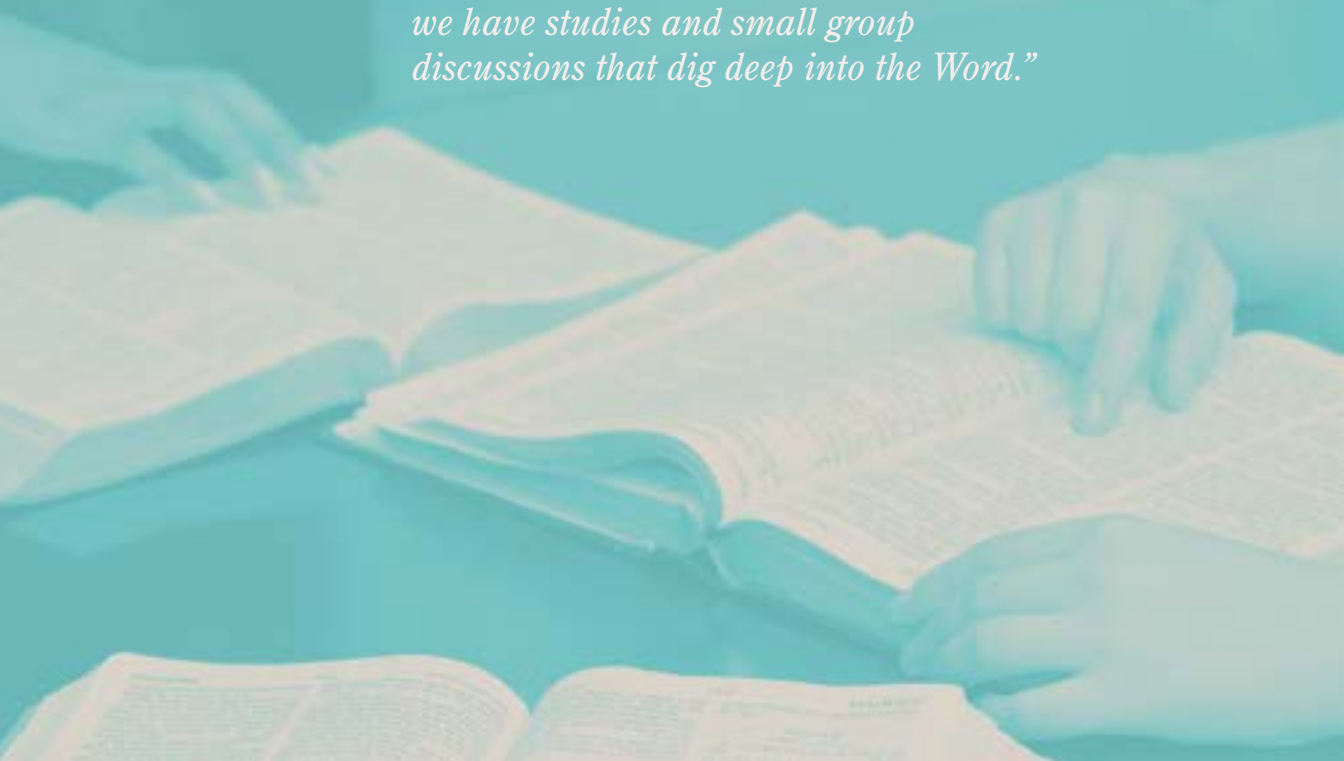
– Scott McConnell, Executive Director of Lifeway Research

# WOMEN'S MINISTRY LEADERS

---

Creating value for  
ministry to women

*“I am passionate about women’s ministry and have been involved in leadership for several years now, personally investing in making sure we have studies and small group discussions that dig deep into the Word.”*



# Who's Leading Women's Ministries?

## Why do women choose to lead the women's ministry in their churches?

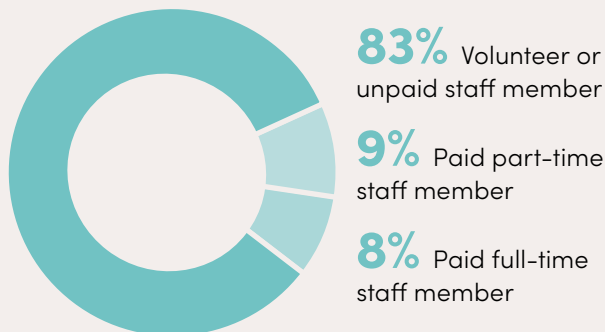


*“Women need women of faith to guide, lead, and walk with them.”*

Those leading ministry to women in their churches are leading out of obedience to God rather than for personal gain. More than 3 in 4 women (77%) say they are leading because they feel called. Another 55% say they chose to lead because there was a need, and 51% say they lead because it's their gifting.

The majority say each month they sense God confirming their call to lead (95%). As they serve, most women's ministry leaders say they feel God is guiding them in their leadership (94%). And they lead sacrificially, with more than 4 in 5 (83%) serving as volunteers or unpaid staff members. Far fewer leaders are paid part-time staff members (9%) or paid full-time staff members (8%).

## 1 in 6 women's ministry leaders are in a paid position



*“It's no surprise women are leading sacrificially, but the extent to which women are leading without compensation, even at large churches, should be a wake-up call. Imagine the impact churches could have with more intentionality and investment in building the leader of a ministry that likely reaches over half of a church's attendees.”*

— Becky Loyd, Former Director of Lifeway Women

# 5 ways your church can invest more in ministry to women

## 1. Pray for ministry to women

We should be praying regularly for the women in our churches.

## 2. Plan alongside women's ministry leaders

There needs to be increased partnership between women's ministry leaders and leaders within the church. This would streamline ministry to women to fit under the umbrella of the mission and vision of the church. This would result in stronger, more effective ministry to women within the church.

## 3. Organize ministry to women

Church staff must be willing to come alongside women's ministry leaders and support them in planning and organization.

## 4. Recruit, train, and empower leaders to minister to women

So often, we leave it up to women's ministry leaders to navigate ministry alone. The Bible is clear that pastors and church staff members are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12). We must do a better job of recruiting, training, and empowering our women's ministry leaders.

## 5. Support ministry to women

We can support ministry to women in two specific ways. First, we need to care for the personal spiritual development of women's ministry leaders. Second, we need to support ministry to women by financially investing in the work.

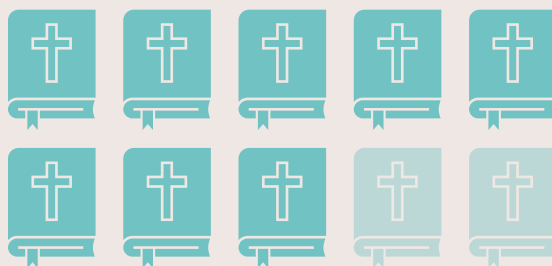
# First Things First

*“Women’s ministry is a place where I can learn more about God, grow closer in my relationship to God, be encouraged, and find close friendships.”*

**Most women’s ministry leaders say discipling women and encouraging their walks with Christ is the top priority for their ministries (57%).** And events play an important role in reaching this goal. More than 4 in 5 (88%) women’s ministries offer Bible studies for women to disciple them and encourage their walks with Christ. Most also offer time for women to pray together (57%). Others provide opportunities to serve in the community (48%) or attend conferences as a group (40%).

By far, women’s ministry leaders say offering Bible studies for women is one of the most effective events for encouraging women on their faith journey with Christ (80%). Leaders also say offering times for prayer (23%), attending conferences (16%), and providing opportunities to serve the community (13%) are some of the most effective events for encouraging women in their faith.

**80% of women’s ministry leaders say Bible studies for women are effective for discipleship.**



# Engaging women in community and spiritual growth through Bible study

At the end of the day, every believer is individually responsible for their spiritual growth and biblical literacy. But the church plays a huge role in this process.

## 1. Recognize women are hungry for Bible study

Women's desire for growth and knowledge is exciting, and it's why 1 in 3 (32%) female churchgoers say Bible studies offered by their church is the thing their church offered that most encouraged them in their walk with Christ. Another 1 in 10 (10%) say Bible study skills training was helpful in their walk with Christ.

Bible study is the launching pad for other spiritual disciplines and for further engagement in the local church. Groups are great for discussion, community, and accountability. Bible study has a way of exposing the truth, correcting, bringing up questions, and challenging each of us.

## 2. Make groups work

Create opportunities for all women to have the chance to participate. This often means childcare and other considerations need to be taken into account. Working women need opportunities outside of a morning Bible study offered at the church. Moms typically need childcare, and sometimes that cost needs to come out of a church budget.

We often make Bible study more complicated than it needs to be, or we let potential hurdles get in the way of us truly providing effective ways for women to grow. What excuses have you made when it comes to women's Bible study?

## 3. Prepare for Bible studies

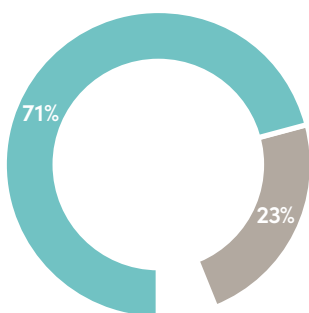
Accessibility to Bible studies has never been greater. Whether it's streaming teaching videos online, digital versions of studies, or global availability, we are living in a time where we are without excuse. And at the end of the day, God's Word is all you need. Everything else is a tool and resource meant to supplement.

# Ministry to Women and the Church

*“Our leadership team evaluates each activity using multiple approaches to determine whether to do the activity again, what worked, what didn’t, and what would make it better.”*

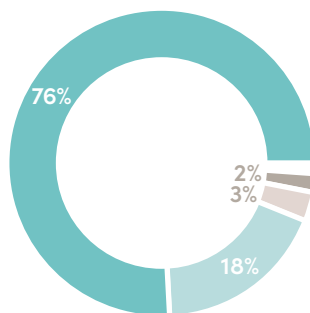
As women’s ministry leaders reflect on the role their ministry plays in the local church, most say their church values their women’s ministry (93%). Most (94%) also say their ministry regularly receives support from their pastor, with more than 3 in 4 (76%) strongly agreeing. And 71% say their church provides the women’s ministry with funds from the church budget. **But few (5%) conduct women’s ministry planning together with the church staff.**

Does your church provide the women’s ministry with funds from the church budget to spend?



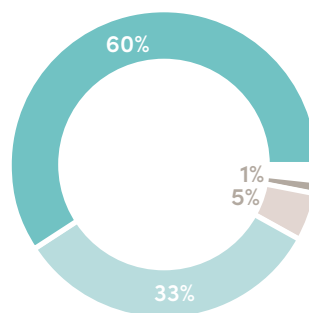
■ Yes ■ No

Our women’s ministry regularly receives support from our church’s pastor(s).



Strongly Agree ■ Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Disagree

Our entire church values our women’s ministry.



Strongly Agree ■ Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree ■ Strongly Disagree

# 3 ways pastors can support women's ministry leaders

## 1. Communicate their value

Before she is a ministry leader, she is a daughter of God and a sister in Christ. If your church is large enough to hire women for ministry positions, this is a great way to communicate their value. We show their value when we hire qualified women to have a formative voice in the direction of the church, helping in the shared mission God has entrusted to all of us.

If your church is not in a position where you can hire a women's ministry leader, have a plan in place for when and how you compensate various women's ministry leaders and equip volunteers with everything you can. Remember: Money isn't the only way we show value or appreciation.

## 2. Partner with them

Pastors tend to think of support in terms of permission (You've got authority to execute this ministry), while most women in ministry think of support in terms of partnership (We're laboring toward a shared vision, together). The more pastors can partner with women's ministry leaders, showing how their ministry integrates into the life of the whole church, the better.

## 3. Develop them

Development in ministry is a non-negotiable. Don't be so sheepish about doing it wrong that you don't do it at all.

You might begin by thinking about ways your church is already providing development for other groups—for your staff, deacons, other lay leaders. Is there anything there you could reproduce? You could invite them to participate in cohorts you're already leading. Recommend books that have helped you develop your leadership skills. Consider setting aside some funds in the church budget for conferences.



# Challenges and Needs

*“Women’s ministry gives me an opportunity to develop relationships with other ladies in different age groups and strengthens my walk with the Lord by allowing me to fellowship with other ladies in the church.”*

Women’s ministries in churches face many challenges. But leaders say the biggest challenges their ministries face are women not attending or participating (48%) and connecting with women in different age groups (45%). Women’s ministry leaders also see a variety of areas they feel they need to develop as leaders, with their top leadership needs having to do with recruiting leaders (43%), vision and direction (40%), and teaching and training (33%).

## Top 5 leadership needs

Recruiting leaders

43%

Vision and direction

40%

Teaching and training

33%

Promoting and advertising

30%

Conflict management

23%

## 7 ways ministry to women strengthens your whole church

### 1. Provides mentorship

The Bible commands us to invest in women. Titus 2:3-5 commands older women to teach and train younger women.

### 2. Encourages transparency

Women’s ministry gives space for the type of vulnerability and depth of sharing that happens among women only when men are not in the room.

### 3. Cultivates spiritual gifts

Women’s ministry makes it easier to recognize and cultivate women’s gifts. A women’s ministry leader can give her pastor a deeper understanding of the wealth of ministry gifts within the congregation.

### 4. Strengthens pastoral care

Women’s ministry provides more comprehensive pastoral care that is specific to a woman’s unique needs.

### 5. Meets women’s unique needs

Women have a deep need for relationships with other women. The reality is that women go where they can connect to other women.

### 6. Promotes church health

Every church needs godly “mothers” who are encouraged to speak into the lives of younger women. Additionally, leadership in churches should have godly women who can act as spiritual mothers and speak wisdom from a needed female perspective.

### 7. Creates evangelistic opportunities

Most people come to Christ because they have formed relationships with Christians. Women’s ministry is an excellent way to facilitate those relationships.

# The Bottom Line on the State of Ministry to Women

What do these numbers mean for you, your church, and the women in your pews?

The women in your church are worth investing in. They are hungry for relationships with other believers and for a closer walk with God, and your church can help them. But it takes time and commitment. Investing in and equipping women in your church must be more than lip service. Hopefully, the actionable insights in this report have helped you begin to think about ways you can more intentionally invest in women. It doesn't have to be complicated, but it does have to be intentional.

For churches that don't yet have an organized ministry to women, starting one is the best place to begin. Pray and seek out a woman in your church who you can equip to invest in the women in your congregation. By cultivating a specific ministry to women, your church can help women have strong relationships with other women, provide opportunities for them to be refreshed and restored spiritually and emotionally, and provide a place to ask questions and openly discuss topics of faith.

And the impacts of your investment in women in the church goes beyond the women who show up for an event. When women are equipped to play their part in the body of Christ, the whole body is strengthened and built up.

For churches that already have an established women's ministry, perhaps it's time for pastors to have an honest conversation with their women's ministry leader. Does she feel she is getting the support she needs? Are pastors working alongside women's ministry leaders like the co-laborers they were made to be?

Women's ministry leaders are passionate about discipling women and encouraging them in their walks with Christ. But, like any leader, there are challenges they face. Women's ministry leaders should know they are not alone in ministry. Their pastor and other church leaders are uniquely positioned to provide support from someone who understands their particular ministry context. For challenges that are more specific to women's ministry, [Lifeway Women](#) is a trusted resource for community, training, and resources in ministry.

 Learn more about our findings, trends, and recommendations for navigating ministry at [LifewayResearch.com](https://www.lifewayresearch.com).

### **About the State of Ministry to Women Study**

Lifeway Research conducted the online survey of 1,001 American evangelical and Black Protestant female churchgoers March 13-17, 2023, using a national pre-recruited panel. Respondents were screened to include those whose faith group preference is an evangelical or Black Protestant group and who attend religious services at least once a month. Quotas and slight weights were used to balance age, region, ethnicity, education, religious service attendance, and religious tradition to more accurately reflect the population. The completed sample is 1,001 surveys. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error from the panel does not exceed plus or minus 3.2%. This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

Lifeway Research conducted the online survey of 842 women's ministry leaders April 19-May 22, 2023. Sample lists of women who may have women's ministry roles were developed from Lifeway's ministry and sales lists. Each respondent was screened to ensure they are the women's ministry leader at their church and that their church is an evangelical or Black Protestant church in the U.S. Southern Baptist women's ministry leaders were oversampled. The 466 Southern Baptist responses were weighted down to reflect their correct proportion of evangelical and Black Protestant churches. Responses were weighted by church size, region, and religious tradition/denomination to more accurately reflect the population. The usable sample is 842 surveys, with 733 answering all questions. The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed plus or minus 5.8%. This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting. Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.

### **About Lifeway Research**

Lifeway Research is a Middle Tennessee-based, evangelical research firm that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches. Our work has been covered by national and international media, (Religion News Service, *Christianity Today*, NPR, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, and many others) and translated into multiple languages.

### **About Lifeway Christian Resources**

In operation since 1891, Lifeway Christian Resources is one of the leading providers of Christian resources, including Bibles, books, Bible studies, Christian music and movies, Vacation Bible School and church supplies, as well as camps and events for all ages. Lifeway is the world's largest provider of Spanish Bibles. Based in Brentwood, Tennessee, Lifeway operates as a self-supporting nonprofit. For more information, visit [Lifeway.com](http://Lifeway.com).

