

Developing a Plan for 2017-2019 Ministry Focus "Feel/Siente"

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Many women's ministry groups like to have sub-themes, or facets, of the main ministry focus to study each month. This helps women and girls really dig into the theme and be able to apply it to many areas of their lives and ministries. Coming up with monthly themes shouldn't be the job of a single person, however. Can you imagine how much fun, and how much more meaningful, it would be to incorporate theme development in a ministry gathering? Women and girls would be much more inclined to study themes that they helped brainstorm themselves. These themes would then come out of the hearts and souls of the very women and girls the themes are meant to reach.

Here is a suggested plan: Begin with a time of prayer and scripture reading of the three suggested overall scriptures for the theme. Using a method named "lectio divina" or "Dwelling in the Word" would be an excellent start. In this method, the scripture is read a total of three times, with periods of silence in between. Each time the scripture is read, listeners are encouraged to pay attention in a specific way. The first time, instruction is given to "listen to which word or phrase jumps out at you." Before the second reading, instruction is given to "hear how God is connecting that word or phrase with your life (or ministry)." Before the third reading, instruction is given to "listen for what God is inviting you to do, or to be, through this Scripture." After each time of silence, you may have a brief time of sharing in pairs for participants to offer one another what they've heard or experienced through that reading.

After you've studied the three suggested scriptures, invite participants to silently and individually write on paper how they think this theme or these scriptures would intersect with the lives of women and/or girls in your congregation and your community. After about three minutes of individual writing, have the group get into pairs. Each member of the pair should take a turn sharing with her partner what she has written. Once each has shared with the other, they can then discuss similarities of their lists, and add other items

that may have now arisen out of the discussion. After about five minutes of conversation in this pairing, have each pair get with another pair. Each pair shares with the other pair summaries of their conversations and, again, they find the points of connection and additions that can be made. By now, each set of four women should have a good working list of possible sub-themes. Depending on the size of your group, you can now merge sets of four together into sets of eight, or simply come back together as a whole group to share with one another.

Compile the lists onto newsprint and work together to develop the number of sub-themes you need for your meetings and events over the year. If you have more sub-themes than you can handle in one year, bonus! You've just planned your second year!

Depending on the size of your group, you have some options from here. Invite individual volunteers to take responsibility for leadership of one of the themes/meetings so that leadership is shared around the group. If you have a larger group, perhaps volunteers could work in teams. Other scriptures to support the sub-themes can and should be used—you don't need to use only the suggested scriptures. Find creative ways to express the themes in your meeting space or in the church—bulletin boards, newsletter articles, inserts in Sunday worship bulletins, emailed devotionals, postings on social media... have fun with it!

Share your sub-themes with your sisters in ministry by emailing them to our national office and we'll post them in future issues of Leader's Reader. Your creativity will most certainly inspire others!