



# Biblical Framework for Women's Ministry

Dear Ministry Leader,

Several years ago, my pastor asked me to prayerfully consider joining our church staff as the director of women's ministry. It took me more than a year to say yes—frankly, because the challenge felt too daunting.

Though I attend a large church, we had no formal women's ministry. **I had personally experienced the profound impact of women discipling other women and viewed my own relationships with Christian friends and mentors as vital to my spiritual growth, but I had no idea how to build a women's ministry from scratch.** Even more challenging, I knew the assignment required casting a vision for women's ministry in a congregation where the need for women's ministry had never been tackled. My church needed a visionary and I wasn't sure I was the right girl for the job. In a way I was right, as it was not *my* vision that needed to be paramount, but God's.

How did we begin? How do we build anything that will last? We start with the foundation. That's exactly how we began to build a thriving women's ministry at my church. My women's ministry leadership team, along with church elders and pastors began asking ourselves these questions:

- What is foundational to women's ministry?
- What does God's Word—our foundation for everything—teach about ministering to women, specifically?

This little document is the result. Through prayer and the study of God's Word, this biblical framework became our guide for how to minister to women in ways that were meaningful and gospel-centered. As you build (or renovate, or maintain) the women's ministry at your own church, I hope you will find this biblical framework helpful.

Rooting for you,

Erin Davis

Content Manager for Revive Our Hearts

## 5 Biblical Tenets of Women's Ministry

As we look to God's Word as the authority for all of life and ministry, we find five truths that serve as "tent poles" to lend structure to our concept of women's ministry within the church.

### **Tenet #1:** The Imago Dei: Men and Women are Created Uniquely.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Gen. 1:27)

In the creation account we find a critical truth about mankind. Men and women were created distinctly from the beginning. **While we hold equal value as image bearers of God, we are not the same.** Our differences are meant to illuminate unique truths about who God is. And while many of our deepest needs are universal (eg. salvation, justification, sanctification, and community), some of our needs are gender-specific, as are some of our propensities toward sin.

### **Tenet #2:** Men and Women Have Unique and Complementary Roles within the Home and Church.

God clearly gives the authority of leading both the home and the Church to men (Eph. 5:22–33, 1 Tim. 3:1–7, 2:8–15, Titus 1:5–9). This is not a commentary on the value or capability of women but rather an authority structure that speaks to our unique design.

The original word used is *ezer kenegdo* which translates as "help meet" or "helper" (Gen. 2:18). In our sinful world, this is often taken as an insult or indication of inferiority, but as we read the whole counsel of God we find a radically different truth. When we read the term "helper," or *ezer kenegdo*, elsewhere in Scripture, it always refers to God Himself. We see this in verses like—

- "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life" (Ps. 54:4).
- "So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (Heb. 13:6).
- "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26).

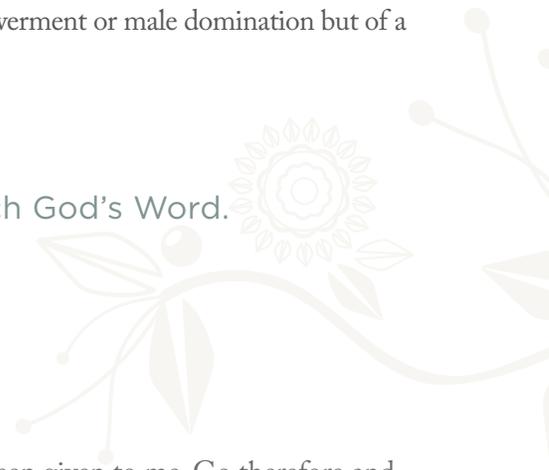
**Women are essential to the health of our homes and churches.** Scripture affirms this with a message that states, in essence, "We couldn't do this without her." Scripture does not give us a message of female empowerment or male domination but of a unique structure where men and women complement each other in their roles.

### **Tenet #3:** All Believers Are Called to Make Disciples and Teach God's Word.

In Jesus' final sermon, He commanded that believers do two things:

1. Make disciples.
2. Teach God's Word.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20)



**Because of our relational tendencies, women are uniquely wired to reach other women with the Gospel through relationship.** Jesus also points out our universal and constant need to be reminded of His teachings as found in His Word. Both men and women have a responsibility to be ambassadors of the Gospel and to be committed, lifelong students of God's Word. However, because we are created uniquely, we often live out these responsibilities differently.

#### **Tenet #4:** A Proven Method for Effective Discipleship is Gender-Specific and Intergenerational.

In Titus 2, Paul gives young pastor Titus a method for how to fight against false teachings in the church. This proven method still works for helping believers understand and live out the Truth of God's Word.

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. (Titus 2:1-6)

Because men and women are created uniquely, we learn and understand uniquely. While men certainly have the authority to teach women spiritual truths (as husbands, fathers, and pastors), **women also flourish when they regularly gather around God's Word with other women in varied stages of life.** Likewise, men also flourish when they regularly gather around God's Word with other men in varied stages of life.

#### **Tenet #5:** The Church is Dependent on the Gifts of Women.

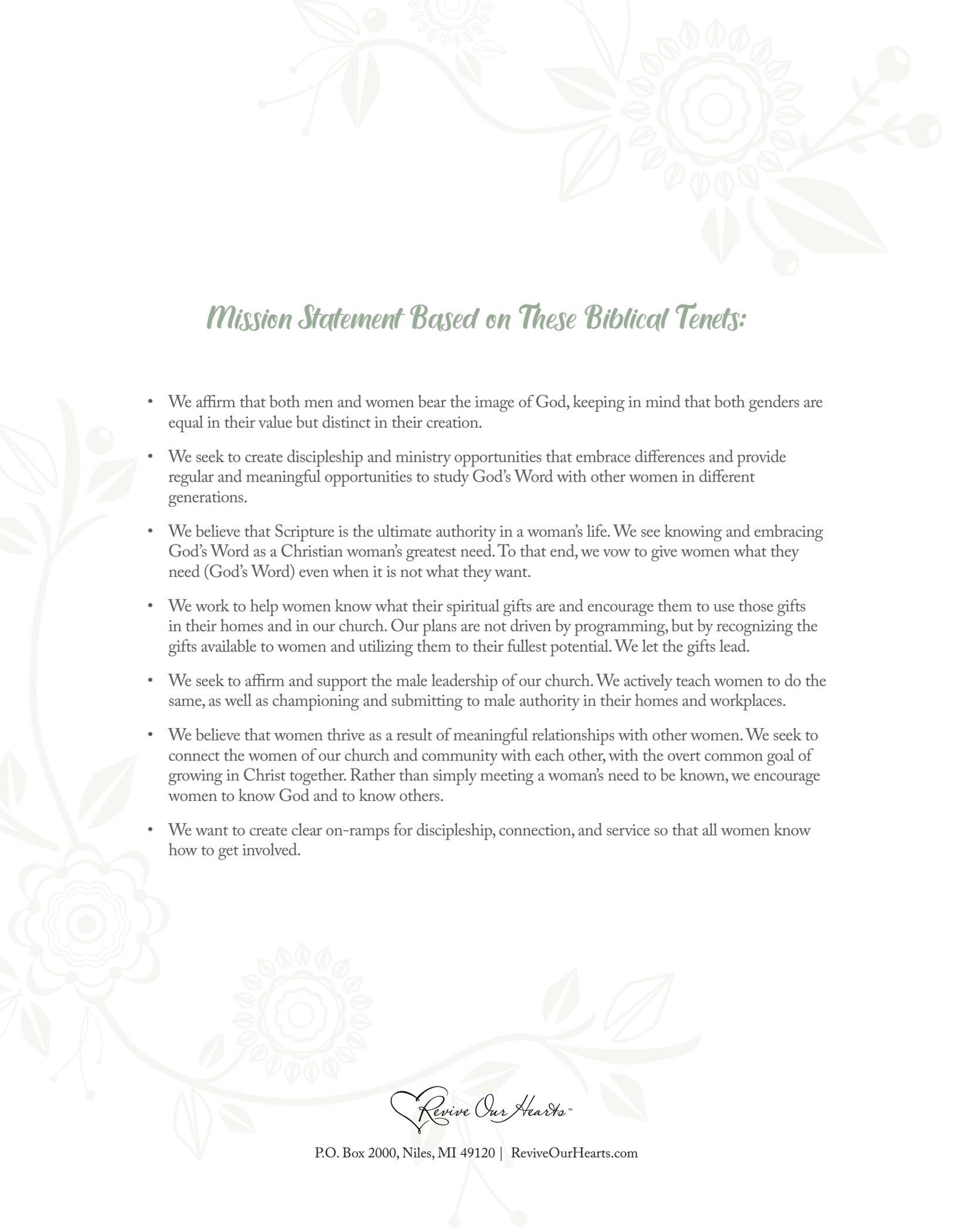
- Throughout Scripture, God used women as ambassadors of truth and hope including Deborah (Jud. 4-5), Abigail (1 Sam. 25), Esther, Ruth, Mary (Matt. 1), Lydia (Acts 16:14), and Priscilla (Acts 18).
- Women were the first ones entrusted with the news that Jesus has risen from the dead (Matt. 28:1-10).
- Women were essential to the building of the same New Testament Church we love and serve today.

Scripture teaches that God has given each believer gifts and that those gifts should be maximized for the spread of the gospel and the health of the Body of Christ: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Pet. 4:10).

**Because women make up at least half of the adult population of the global Church, we affirm God's use of women to build His Kingdom through Scripture, and we seek to recognize and utilize the spiritual gifts of women in order to thrive.**

The contributions of women in the advancement of the kingdom are essential and indispensable ... If we have crafted a vision of the church in which women are extra ... we have crafted a vision of the church that is foreign to the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> —Jen Wilkin

<sup>1</sup>Wilkin, Jen. "Advance 2017 General Session #2- Jen Wilkin." Vimeo. Acts 29 US Southeast. 2017, <https://vimeo.com/243476316>.



## *Mission Statement Based on These Biblical Tenets:*

- We affirm that both men and women bear the image of God, keeping in mind that both genders are equal in their value but distinct in their creation.
- We seek to create discipleship and ministry opportunities that embrace differences and provide regular and meaningful opportunities to study God's Word with other women in different generations.
- We believe that Scripture is the ultimate authority in a woman's life. We see knowing and embracing God's Word as a Christian woman's greatest need. To that end, we vow to give women what they need (God's Word) even when it is not what they want.
- We work to help women know what their spiritual gifts are and encourage them to use those gifts in their homes and in our church. Our plans are not driven by programming, but by recognizing the gifts available to women and utilizing them to their fullest potential. We let the gifts lead.
- We seek to affirm and support the male leadership of our church. We actively teach women to do the same, as well as championing and submitting to male authority in their homes and workplaces.
- We believe that women thrive as a result of meaningful relationships with other women. We seek to connect the women of our church and community with each other, with the overt common goal of growing in Christ together. Rather than simply meeting a woman's need to be known, we encourage women to know God and to know others.
- We want to create clear on-ramps for discipleship, connection, and service so that all women know how to get involved.

