

Women Who Lead: A Guided Conversation on Shared Leadership and Mutuality

Facilitator Guide | An Awaken Formation Resource

About This Resource

Awaken supports and partners with the Church as women and men discern God's call and lead together according to gifts and grace. This guide helps churches create spaces where mutuality is practiced, not debated—where listening, imagination, and courage grow quietly through faithful presence and shared discernment.

This is not a curriculum to master. It is a formation practice—an invitation to slow down, notice one another, and attend to God's work among us.

Purpose

Create a hospitable, prayerful space where men and women can:

- Share stories of leadership shaped by Scripture, history, and contemporary life
- Listen across differences with humility and curiosity
- Discern how God may be inviting the community toward deeper mutuality and shared leadership

Intended Context

- Mixed-gender groups (8–20 participants)
- Leadership teams, ministry teams, or intentional small groups
- Churches seeking to cultivate equity, trust, and shared leadership over time
- Recommended time: 60–90 minutes (adaptable)

The Role of the Facilitator

Facilitators are keepers of the space, not teachers or referees.

Your role is to:

- Set a tone of curiosity and thoughtfulness

- Protect the voices in the room
- Hold silence without rushing resolution
- Trust God's work in unfinished conversations

Awaken encourages co-facilitation by a woman and a man, modeling shared leadership and mutual trust.

Preparing the Space

Prepare Your Own Posture

- Spend time in prayer for attentiveness over outcomes
- Release the need to manage agreement
- Pray for courage shaped by love, not urgency

Prepare the Room

- Arrange seating in a circle or around tables
- Avoid podiums or hierarchical placement
- Consider a simple center: Bible, candle, or printed Scripture

Opening the Gathering (10 minutes)

Welcome & Framing

Read or paraphrase:

“Tonight is not about arriving at conclusions or solving questions about leadership. It is about noticing—God at work, and the ways our different voices and stories shape leadership together. We are here to practice mutuality, imagination, and shared discernment.”

Establish a Shared Covenant

Invite participants to agree to:

- Speak from personal experience (“I” statements)
- Listen without interruption
- Honor stories without needing consensus
- Leave space for silence

- Trust God's work in ongoing formation

Pause for verbal or visible agreement.

Guiding the Conversation

1. Remembering Leadership Stories (15 minutes)

Formation Focus: Story before structure

Invite participants to reflect:

- Who are women whose leadership has shaped your faith—Scripture, history, or today?
- How have moments of shared leadership across gender, culture, or context revealed God at work?
- Where have you first experienced leadership shaped by difference?

Facilitator Notes:

- Encourage brief sharing (1–2 min per person)
- Gently redirect teaching or generalizations
- Affirm stories without evaluation
- Highlight connections to mutuality and shared imagination

2. Naming What Shapes Leadership (15 minutes)

Formation Focus: Honoring difference and context

Invite reflection:

- What influences—history, Scripture, culture, or experience—shape your approach to leadership differently from others?
- Where do you notice tension between expectations and space for every voice?
- How might intentionally noticing differences expand imagination for leadership?

Optional prompt:

Consider whose courage and faithfulness—past or present—have shaped your imagination for leadership.

Facilitator Notes:

- Normalize tension, ambiguity, and mixed emotions
- Acknowledge exclusion or pain without defending it
- Encourage linking personal experience to communal imagination

3. Listening for God Together (15 minutes)

Formation Focus: Communal discernment

Invite the group to consider:

- Where have we seen God at work when leadership is shared across difference?
- What practices help us discern faithfully while giving room for every voice?
- How might the Spirit be inviting us to notice new possibilities for leadership?
- How can we cultivate imagination and mutuality without controlling difference?

Facilitator Notes:

- Shift from individual stories to shared noticing
- Encourage curiosity and wonder, not problem-solving
- Invite listening for God's invitation to growth, formation, and mutuality

Holding the Space Well

- Tension: pause, breathe, re-center on faithful listening
- Dominant voice: kindly invite quieter voices to share
- Heavy silence: trust it—discernment often deepens there

Closing the Gathering (10–15 minutes)

Reflection:

- Where might God invite deeper trust and shared courage?
- How can I notice and make space for voices different from my own?

Closing Prayer or Blessing:

- Imagination to see leadership differently
- Courage to step into shared calling
- Mutuality shaped by grace and love

End by thanking participants for their presence and attentiveness.

After the Conversation

Facilitators should debrief with co-facilitators, notice themes without rushing action, and share insights with leadership without naming individuals. Mutuality is formed over time through faithful listening and shared obedience.

Women Who Lead: Guided Conversation

Participant Guide | An Awaken Formation Resource

Theme: Honoring women whose leadership rises like a song—Scripture, history, and today.

Purpose

Create a space where men and women:

- Share leadership stories shaped by different experiences
- Listen with humility and curiosity
- Notice how God invites deeper mutuality and shared leadership

Time: 60–90 minutes

Group size: 8–20

Opening (10 min)

1. Welcome & Framing:

“Tonight is not about conclusions. It is about noticing God at work, and how our voices and stories shape leadership together.”

2. Shared Covenant:

- Speak from personal experience
- Listen without interruption
- Honor stories without consensus
- Leave space for silence
- Trust God’s ongoing work

Conversation Flow

1. Remembering Leadership Stories (15 min)

- Who are women whose leadership shaped your faith? (Scripture, history, today)

- Where have you first experienced leadership shaped by difference?
- How have shared leadership moments revealed God at work?

2. Naming What Shapes Leadership (15 min)

- What influences shape your leadership differently from others?
- Where do you notice tension between expectations and space for every voice?
- Optional: Whose courage and faithfulness shaped your imagination for leadership?

3. Listening for God Together (15 min)

- Where has God been at work when leadership is shared across difference?
- What practices help the group discern faithfully while giving room for every voice?
- How might God be inviting new possibilities for leadership in your ministry or team?

Closing (10–15 min)

Reflection:

- Where might God invite deeper trust and shared courage?
- How can you notice and make space for voices different from your own?

Closing Prayer or Blessing:

- Imagination to see leadership differently
- Courage to step into shared calling
- Mutuality shaped by grace and love