

Shared Leadership in Ministry: A Guided Conversation on Mutuality and Collaboration

Summarize

An **Awaken Formation Resource** exploring shared leadership, mutuality, and flourishing partnerships in ministry.

About This Resource

Awaken partners with the Church to support women and men as they 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 ministry
- 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)

Focus: Story before structure

Invite participants to reflect:

- Who are the women or men in your life—past or present—whose leadership has shaped the way you serve or lead?
- Can you share a time when working alongside someone different from you revealed something new about God or ministry?
- Think about a moment when you first noticed how shared leadership could work—what happened, and what did it teach you?

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)

Focus: Honoring difference and context

Invite reflection:

- What experiences—growing up, schooling, church life, or work—have influenced how you lead differently from others?
- Where have you noticed assumptions or expectations get in the way of hearing everyone's voice?
- What small habits or practices have helped you include others' perspectives in your ministry or team?

Optional prompt:

- Who has inspired your imagination for leadership—through courage, faithfulness, or simply showing up?

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)

Focus: Communal discernment

Invite the group to consider:

- When have you seen God at work in a team or ministry where leadership was shared?
- What approaches or practices help your group listen and decide together without anyone dominating the conversation?

- How might God be inviting your team or community to try something new in the way you lead together?
- What small, practical steps can you take to make space for voices that aren't usually heard?

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.

Mutuality in Motion: A Guided Conversation (PDF | Facilitator & Participant Guide)

Awaken partners with the Church to empower, equip, and engage women for leadership—cultivating communities where women and men lead together according to gifts and calling.