

BECHARITYWISE

Equipping Churches & Ministries to Serve the Hurting Well



THE FREE MINISTRY

Startup Toolkit

A BeCharityWise Guide for Church Leaders
Launching a New Ministry Program

Inside: the Rescue • Rebuild • Restore framework, five questions to answer before you launch, and three fillable planning templates.

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A Word From Suzanne

You want to do good. I want to help you do good — well.

If you're reading this, you've already felt the pull. Maybe it's a woman in crisis your church keeps encountering and doesn't quite know how to help. Maybe it's a gap in your community nobody else is filling. Maybe it's simply a conviction that won't leave you alone.

Here's what I've learned in twenty years of ministry to the poor and disenfranchised, including founding a maternity home from a folding table and a prayer: good intentions aren't the problem. Most church leaders I meet have compassion to spare. What's usually missing is a sequence — a wise, workable order of operations that turns “we should do something” into a program that actually helps people and doesn't burn out your team in year one.

This toolkit gives you that sequence. It won't answer every question. It will get you asking the right ones, in the right order, before you spend a dollar or recruit a volunteer.

Let's begin.

— Suzanne Burns, Founder, BeCharityWise

The Sequence to Success: Rescue, Rebuild, Restore

Success in ministry doesn't happen by chance. It happens by choice — specifically, the choice to follow a sequence instead of jumping straight to programs and services.

RESCUE

Address the immediate need — body and soul. Before you build anything else, ask what safety and stability actually look like for the person in front of you.

REBUILD

Strengthen spirit and soul through Spirit-led tools. This is where shame gets addressed, trust gets rebuilt, and purpose starts to take shape.

RESTORE

Bring wholeness through community and the Holy Spirit's power — restoring people not just to stability, but to a life that serves others.

Most new ministries skip straight to “Restore” — they want to see transformation stories on day one. But a program built without Rescue and Rebuild in place tends to produce burnout on your team and relapse in the people you serve. This toolkit is built to help you launch with all three phases in view from the start.

Where Are You Starting From?

Every BCW ministry falls somewhere on this path. Knowing where you are shapes what you need next.

Season	What It Looks Like
Startup to Stable	You're dreaming of a new ministry, or you have one and want to add a new service (like housing). This toolkit is written for you.
Stable to Strong	You've been open two to five years. You have staff and volunteers who need different levels of training and support.
Strong and Spreading	You've been open five-plus years and are expanding: new programs, new locations, new layers of staffing.

If you're in the Startup to Stable season, everything that follows is your next right step.

Five Questions Every Founder Must Answer Before Launch

Answer these honestly — on paper, with your leadership team — before you announce anything publicly.

1. Who, specifically, are we called to serve?

Not “the poor” or “families in crisis” in general — name the actual population, the actual need, in your actual community.

2. What does trauma-informed mean for this population?

Poverty mindset, addiction, and trauma shape behavior in ways that look like ingratitude, inconsistency, or manipulation to an untrained eye. Understanding root causes is what separates lasting transformation from a revolving door.

3. What is the smallest version of this ministry that still works?

Most startups fail by launching too big. What is the version you could sustain for twelve months with your current team and budget?

4. Who is doing this already, and where's the gap?

Duplicate effort helps no one. Find the other churches and nonprofits in your area serving this population, and locate the specific gap you're uniquely positioned to fill.

5. Who is our first “yes”?

Every ministry needs a founding team willing to show up before there's a program to point to. Name them.

Template: Ministry Program Planning Worksheet

Use this worksheet with your launch team. It's meant to be filled in — messy first drafts welcome.

Planning Element	Your Answer
Ministry name (working title)	
Population served	
Core need being addressed	
Rescue: What immediate need do we meet first?	
Rebuild: What tools help people move from crisis to stability?	
Restore: What does “graduation” or ongoing community look like?	
Initial services (list 2–3, not 10)	
Founding team members and roles	
90-day launch goal	

Planning Element	Your Answer
First-year sustainability plan (funding, church budget, grants)	

Template: Community Needs Snapshot

A quick assessment to keep you from building a solution to a problem your community doesn't actually have.

Question	Your Notes
What specific crisis or need do we see repeatedly in our community?	
Who is already serving this need (churches, nonprofits, government)?	
Where is the gap in what currently exists?	
How do we know this need is real (stories, data, conversations)?	
What would change for our community if this ministry succeeded?	

Template: Simple Startup Budget

Most new ministries need far less than founders assume — and far more clarity about where the money goes.

Budget Category	Est. Cost	Notes
Staffing / stipends		Even part-time coordination needs a named, budgeted person
Space / facility		Church space, rented space, or in-home to start
Program supplies		Materials specific to your services
Training (staff & volunteer)		Trauma-informed training is not optional — budget for it
Marketing / outreach		Simple materials to reach your population and referral partners
Contingency (10–15%)		Every ministry needs a cushion in year one
Total estimated startup cost		

Three Pitfalls That Stall New Ministries

Skipping trauma awareness. If you don't understand how trauma, poverty mindset, and addiction shape decision-making, you'll misread the very behaviors you're trying to help change — and mistake entitlement for what is actually a survival response.

Building policies around entitlement instead of empowerment. Well-meaning giving without structure often produces dependency, not transformation. The wisest ministries build in dignity and mutual responsibility from day one.

Ignoring secondary trauma in your own team. The leaders and volunteers who carry this work will absorb some of what they witness. A ministry that doesn't plan for staff and volunteer care will lose its best people within the first two years.

Your Next Step

This toolkit is a starting point, not a finish line. If you're ready to move from “we should do something” to a ministry that actually works — without losing your team or your peace along the way — here's how BCW can help:

- **Schedule a free one-on-one Mission Strategy Session** with Suzanne to talk through your specific community and next steps.
- **Explore The Wisdom Method: Startup Edition**, BCW's year-long coaching program built for ministries in the Startup to Stable season.
- **Read Rescue, Rebuild, Restore: Compassion That Works** for the full framework behind this toolkit.

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