

Women's Ministry: Past, Present, Future **Women's Ministry of the Present**

If we are going to be honest and explore Women's Ministry, we have to address a few things. We have to acknowledge the ways we are doing women's ministry the right way, and we also need to expose where we are failing women.

Walk into any typical American church, and you will see a women's ministry program that is filled with social actives, sprinkled with a bit of God. A painting night at a local art studio, with a short devotion before we begin. A women's brunch with a local motivational speaker, to help us overcome potty training or bring back intimacy with our husbands. You may find yourself at a book study that spends 30 minutes socializing before starting the 15 minute video and ending in 5 minutes of prayer.

Sound familiar? It does to me. In my past experience with Women's Ministry, I have planned these types of event. I saw the purpose in them, but I can tell you I was also never satisfied with them. I knew we were being called to MORE. But, you can easily get caught up in more activities, when God is actually calling you to MORE OF HIM.

Let me assure you, He is calling for more, and it isn't going unnoticed. If you want to know why we are not reaching our next generation of women, spend a little time researching, you won't have to look far.

A quick internet search will pull up articles and blogs that will gladly tell us all what we are doing wrong in women's ministry. Probably one of the best pieces, from this perspective, is written by author Sarah Bessey. In her "Open Letter to Women's Ministry" she speaks candidly as a woman who is fed up with craft projects and decorating tips, she wants something deeper than this week's motivational speaker, and glossed over book studies. Women are craving more. I have included a link to her article in the Bonus Resources at the end of this course, so you can read it for yourself. But, I'd like to share this quote from the letter:

So here is my suggestion: Please stop treating women's ministry like a Safe Club for the Little Ladies to Play Church.

We are smart. We are brave. We want to change the world. We run marathons to benefit our sisters, not so that we can lose weight. We have more to offer to the church than our mad decorating skills. I look around, and I can see that these women can offer strategic leadership, wisdom, counsel, and even, yes, teaching. We want to give and serve and make a difference. We want to be challenged. We want to read books and talk politics, theology, and current events. We want to wrestle through our theology. We want to listen to each other. We want to worship, we want to intercede for our sisters and weep with those who weep, rejoice with those that rejoice, to create life and art and justice with intention.

Let's be a community of women, gathered together to live more whole-heartedly, to sharpen, challenge, love, and inspire one another to then scatter back out to our worlds bearing the mandate to be women that love. [Idelette McVicker](#) wrote:

Let us RISE to the questions of our time.

Let us SPEAK to the injustices in our world.

Let us MOVE the mountains of fear and intimidation.

Let us SHOUT down the walls that separate and divide.

Let us FILL the Earth with the fragrance of Love.

Let us be women who Love.

When you read that, I would hope you would be inspired. I know I am, but I have to admit... I like getting together with women to make crafts and swap recipes. There is a place for this within the Women's Ministry, but at the same time, we have to be cautious that those activities don't become the focus of the Women's Ministry. Which is, and should always be Christ.

You may wonder then, is women's ministry even important anymore?

And I would say, YES! However it is starting to take a new shape, women want more & we are on the cusp of transition. Even REVIVAL, if I could be so bold.

You see it at a women's brunch, when we hand the microphone over to the woman who sits in the pews with us every Sunday. She stands up, to share her testimony. She lost her children, and nearly her own life due to addiction. God has delivered her from her addiction and she is the progress of restoring the relationship with her children. It's authenticity, at it's finest. We skip the DIY project, and pray over her recovery.

It happens when a group of women gather at a public park, on a Saturday morning, to pray over their children, the schools, the city and the country.

You are immersed in it when you attend a women's conference that is less concert and motivation and instead offers workshops on systematic theology, and reads an entire book of scripture start to finish, unpacking it verse by verse.

You are a part of the ministry, when your small group decides to skip meeting the 4th week of every month and instead volunteers at a local homeless shelter.

You are making the transition when you invite a group of women to your home to have coffee and dig into an expository bible study, instead of the next best seller.

You are living it, when you head into that foreign country (or even local neighborhood) and rescue a broken woman from the bondage of the sex slave industry.

You are part of the change, when you enroll in a school like this, to equip yourself as a future leader.

In the book "Women's Ministry in the Local Church", Ligon Duncan & Susan Hunt do an amazing job of helping us understand the place Women's Ministry has in our church today. He describes his mother, and wife, both of whom had Pastors and leaders invest in their understanding of the scriptures. Through that investment, they in turn were able to invest into the women of their church. Which is exactly what Paul instructs Timothy (and other leaders) to do in his letter in 1st Timothy.

Carrie Sandom, writes in "Word-filled Women's Ministry":

"This means that we have a tremendous responsibility not just to faithfully teach God's word to others in our own generation, but also to train up those who will be faithful teachers and trainers of the next

generation. And in women's ministry it is no different. I am hugely grateful to God for the faithful men and women he has used to teach me the Bible and then to train me to teach and train other women to be teachers and trainers of others."

In a recent conference I attended, a group of women gathered for a workshop session on Women's Ministry. I sat, listening, as women described what women's ministry in their church looked like. These are churches of today, in 2015.

- There is no women's ministry, the leaders of the church do not believe it is biblical for women to teach at all.
- There is a women's ministry, the leaders are ok with the women teaching but only from a select set of resources.
- There is not a women's ministry in the church, but the women are attending parachurch organizations for deeper scriptural study.
- There is a women's ministry but the only thing they do is a few bible studies a year.
- There is a women's ministry they have a luncheon every few months.
- There is sort of a women's ministry, but we really don't have a plan. We just sort of pick a book and study it.
- We have a strong women's ministry, but it is superficial. We are trying to change that, but we can't get church leadership to change how they view "women's ministry" they see it like a coffee club.

I could help but notice a theme, each woman presented a case where Women's Ministry was simply not cutting it. Even the best scenarios, with thriving active ministries, they wanted something deeper.

At this same conference, I attended a workshop on Women in Seminary. This workshop was filled to capacity within minutes of the online registration. As you approached the room, you could see women lined up outside, hoping. They were hoping that there would still be some space available. They were hoping someone wouldn't show, or they could squeeze in... even if it meant sitting on the floor.

These were not women IN seminary, they were women who were being called into seminary. And, they desperately wanted to understand how to proceed with that call. What about finances? What would I do with it? Is this appropriate for me, as woman? A room of near 50 women, feeling called to seminary ... trying to JUSTIFY formal biblical training! As if we need to justify, as Christians, a reason to come to deeper knowledge of the scriptures and relationship with God through his word!

This is the state of Women's Ministry in the present, an ember has started to burn. We need to start fanning those flames. The social aspects of the ministry still have a place, simply because of the disconnected world we live in. But those social aspects should be the launching pad into deeper, living waters.

I had an opportunity to sit in on a workshop led by Ligon Duncan on Systematic Theology. In his opening remarks, he joked that he anticipated that maybe two people would attend, and how pleased he was to see a packed room (I believe there were well over 50 of us). As I looked around the room, I marveled at the men in attendance... some looked fresh out of high school, others were older seasoned Pastors who were there to listen to a man they respected. The exciting thing for me, though, was the number of women (also of varied ages), pens at the ready....