

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

In Hannah Anderson's book "Made for More", she writes:

"Too often as women, we have restricted ourselves to the "pink" parts of the Bible. When we identify first and foremost as women, we can begin to believe that knowledge of ourselves will come primarily through passages that speak to women's issues or include heroines like Ruth or Esther. But when we do this, we craft our learning and discipleship programs around being "women", we make womanhood the central focus of our pursuit of knowledge instead of Christ."

This is the future of Women's Ministry.

Women stepping out of the confines of the "pink" parts of the Bible and digging deeper & falling in love with the Old Testament scriptures, pointing toward a Messiah that will restore God's creation. They will add to the "pink" scriptures, with the RED scriptures... the words of the living God, Jesus ... piercing their hearts and challenging them to a greater life. Women will embrace the pink scriptures, and be moved by the guidance of the apostles to share the gospel to the ends of the earth. We will reclaim Women's Ministry, restoring the Old Testament and New Testament examples at the heart of our ministry and apply them to the world we live in today (and to come).

Women's Ministry should be resulting in change, that is the whole point of why we are doing it. The goal is to lead women to Christ and help them foster a deeper relationship with God, and solid scriptural knowledge. There are women right now, sitting at your decorated brunch table who are ready to make that jump. There are others who may be caught up in tradition or hesitant of change, they need a gentle nudging.

According to Mary Jo Sharp, in her book "Defending the Faith: Apologetics in Women's Ministry" Women's Ministries needs to be comprised of women who can explain and defend their faith. It is our job today, to create that environment. The ripples we start now, will become tidal waves washing over our communities in the future, that keep moving forwarding the gospel everywhere the water falls. Sins being washed clean, new creations in Christ in every neighborhood. But it must start with us in the present! If you don't have a women's ministry already in your church, it will be really easy to create this environment. For those of us in churches with established ministries, it may be a bit harder to reshape the direction of the women's ministry. However, with God, it can be done. You just may need a bit more patience.

Because this ember is already burning the hearts of women today, we have access to studies and materials that can help us create this environment, equipping ourselves and training others. If you are uncertain of where to find these materials, talk with your pastor. He can probably point you in the right direction himself, or even put you in touch with another church he knows of already transitioning their ministry. And, we need to be prepared for those who are going to object to change.

Before we can begin to move forward though, we need to understand the big picture of God's plans and purposes for ANY ministry.

Carrie Sandom points us to three specific things in this big picture.

1. We must understand God's plan for the world: to unite all things in Christ.

According to Ephesians 1:9-10, God's "purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan

for the fullness of time,” is “to unite all things in him” - that is, under the lordship of Christ. This is the endgame to which all of history is heading – when, at the name Jesus, every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:10-11). Knowing the end of God's plan, faithful ministers of God's Word will always have a heart for the lost, urging them to turn from their sins and acknowledge the lordship of Christ before he comes.

2. We must understand God's purpose for the church: to be rooted and established in Christ. According to Colossians 2:6-7, God's purpose for the church is that we should be grounded in our faith, “rooted” and “established” in Christ, and forever thankful for all he has done. The active metaphors of roots growing down into Christ and being built up into Christ show that there is no room for complacency there is always progress to be made. This means faithful Bible teachers will encourage Christians to grow in their knowledge and love of Christ, to be rooted and established in him, and to be more and more thankful.
3. We must understand God's means for achieving this plan and purpose: Scripture According to 2 Timothy 3:15-16, it is the scripture that makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ, and it is Scripture that thoroughly equips us for ministry. All scripture (both Old and New Testament) is inspired by God and profitable for teaching and reproof, also for correction and training in righteousness. There is truth to be taught and error to be corrected. It is never enough to just teach the positives of scripture; the faithful teacher of God's word will also make clear the negatives.

(Excerpt from Chapter 3 of “Word-filled Women's Ministry)

Nancy Guthrie suggests that our End Goal in women's ministry, is the future. It is the the day of the Lord, when all of scripture is fulfilled, when Christ returns. She says, “Ministry among women will matter forever, because women are facing forever. It is easy for ministry among women to be about the here and now – the realities that we can see with our eyes, the things we see as our most significant needs and challenges. We come to the bible, or take women to the Bible, seeking to discover the answers to what we see as our most urgent questions, but often looking primarily for comfort during troubles. We can spend so much time focused on coping strategies and improvement plans for this life that we simply squeeze out both hopeful and sober consideration of the life to come – the forever that will begin on that day. (“Word-filled Women's Ministry)

We have been charged by God, as leaders within the church to lead people to Jesus. That was the goal of Women's Ministry in the past. It has been easy to get side-tracked here, in the present. But God is calling His women back to true Women's Ministry. It starts in the home, ripples out into our church, our community and into the world.

His goals, are our goals. His plans, are our plans.

And to not only understand but execute His plans, we begin in His Word.

Now that we have a greater understanding of history and future of Women's Ministry, we are ready to embark on what it takes to build and maintain an effective Women's Ministry program. More importantly, we are going to learn how to keep our ministry focused foremost on Christ.

We will cover the practical areas of ministry, from an administrative stand point. We will explore training opportunities through bible study and mentoring. We will address the evangelistic

opportunities that social events and retreats provide, and we will close this course digging into the book of 1 Timothy and applying Paul's words directly to Women's Ministry.

When ever we put our feet to the ground, and run closer to God and deeper into his Word... obstacles are bound to be put in our way. I prefer to be as prepared as possible for them. In our next segment, we are going to explore some of the obstacles that you are going to face in Women's Ministry, and how to overcome them.