

## **Educating and Equipping Women** **Discipleship Training & Mentorship Programs**

These studies are important to our women's ministry program for many reasons, according to Gloria Furman in the book *Word-filled Women's Ministry*, because:

- Bible study fuels our zeal for evangelism, we want to share what we learn.
- Bible study equips healthy ambassadors, we have confidence in what we are sharing.
- Bible study shows us all where we fall in God's redemptive story.
- Bible study shows us God, his character, love, mercy, patience, and discipline.
- Bible study turns guests into hosts, it opens our hearts to the filling of the holy spirit to dwell within us.

Studies are very important to our growth process, because it is part of what equips us to discipleship.

*“We ought to have an intentional, deliberate approach to female discipleship because men and women are different, and these differences ought to be recognized, taken into account, and addressed in the course of Christian discipleship. The difference, the distinctness of men and women, is not only obviously displayed to us physiologically, biologically, and psychologically, it is written plainly for us in the opening pages of the Bible.” Susan Duncan, Women's Ministry in the Local Church*

Susan points out that our uniqueness is part of humanities role as image bearers. We have a God that is three persons in one; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. All God, equal but distinct. Man and woman are equal but distinct image bearers.

In ministering to these distinctions we learn that women and men face different temptations in their lives, different struggles, etc. To minister to women, we need to not only recognize that there is a difference, but also embrace it. Who better to minister, than those who understand fully what it is to be a woman, a godly woman.

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (Titus 2:3-5)

*Discipleship that takes place within God's ordained authority structure and that includes equipping women for ministries of community and compassion will invigorate women and the church” Ligon Duncan, Women's Ministry in the Local Church*

Paul charges Titus, and the church, to guard the truth by equipping the people to show and tell truth to future generations. This is rooted in the Old Testament.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

We have an authority and responsibility to teach. All the power of heaven was in Jesus Christ, and he commanded us to go out and make disciples of all nations. He charged us with a task. The local

church is the place where current and future generations are taught the truth, God's Word. The ministries of that church then reach outward into the community sharing the good news with others.

In Titus 2:1 Paul instructs that we are to teach that which is in accordance to sound doctrine. We understand doctrine (the beliefs of our faith) through our Pastors, our own scripture study, and from those who stand in the gap to help lead and guide us with wisdom, knowledge and discernment. As the letter to Titus continues, we learn that not only are we to be in the Word, teach the Word, but we must live a life that reflects the Word. We become teachers and examples to others. Older women, will teach the younger women, in speech and in action.

As there is change revealed in us, we inspire others to want that change. We bring them to Christ by walking the walk, not just talking the talk. As the gospel transforms our lives, we share it with others, who's lives will be transformed, rippling out into the community and creating greater change.

While the type of discipleship may be dependent on age or gender, all discipleship works together, unified in Christ.

*“The leaders of a women's ministry must be unyielding in their commitment to the principles of discipleship presented in Titus 2. They must be diligent in calling and equipping women to assume their generational responsibility to learn from older women and to train younger women. Whether women are teaching a women's bible study, or a class of teenage girls, singing in the choir, decorating for a women's outreach event or serving on the church's mission committee, they should be intentionally training or learning from other women. Women discipling women is not just a program -it's the covenant lifestyle of redeemed women. And it is the responsibility of the women's ministry to equip them for this mission.” Susan Hunt, Women's Ministry in the Local Church.*

Titus 2 is pretty clear in it's instructions, women are called to disciple other women, to mentor the generations coming along behind us.

What is the difference between intentional discipleship and mentoring? These are another set of terms that can be used interchangeably, and for good reason, they mean the same thing. The difference between them is how we execute them within the ministry.

Discipleship is what is happening in our small groups, and Sunday morning services. It is the purposeful teaching of God's word, so that we understand what we believe, and why it is important to share that with the world. We becomes disciples so that we can go make disciples. There are formal discipleship curriculum you can purchase, workshops you can attend, and bible studies that focus right into the heart of the issue. It is usually going to be general principles that everyone should know and apply to their lives.

Mentoring, is a bit more personal. Mentoring is commonly two, but up to 4 people, who are intentionally meeting for discipleship that is more personalized to their calling. A mentor may be an older mother in the church, who is discipling a young single mother. A mentor may be a Pastor or Elder, who is discipling a young man in the church who feels called into full time ministry. These are also more personal relationships than group discipleship, as they tend to discuss personal details of their lives, temptations, struggles. While helping a woman deepen her relationship with Christ, and come to deeper scriptural knowledge, the mentor may also be an accountability partner as the woman deals with her addiction to pornography.

A word of caution, it is important that in mentorship relationships, we as the church are training the mentors to understand when the person needs professional help. Mentors are guides to scripture,

pointing toward Christ.... they are not counselors.

There are some women's ministries that allow mentorship relationships to form naturally in the church, others create intentional mentor partnerships. One church that I know of, has a set plan that after a certain period of time mentors switch. They see this as beneficial because each woman has something different to offer, and if personalities don't mesh women can find a new mentor without there being any hurt feelings. Others look for long term mentorship, even life long. Each church will have a different approach, but mentors should be women who are spiritually mature and invested in study of the Word. Your Pastor, or his wife, may be a great resource in helping you find the women who will serve as the role of mentor. You can also ask for volunteers, but if you do so, please have your Pastor (or is wife) review the volunteer list first. Remember, they have insight into the spiritual maturity and lives of the women in the church we may be unaware of.

A great book, *Women of Influence*, lists 10 traits of women who want to make a difference, these traits can also help you identify mentors in your church.

1. Passionate about influencing and mentoring
2. They gifted with leadership or teaching
3. They have a personal relationship with Jesus
4. They are dreamers, who see the big picture with optimism.
5. They are good with people.
6. They are willing to initiate, or take the first steps.
7. They are women of integrity.
8. They have an intensity that pushes them to endure the long haul.
9. They are inquiring, they ask questions and want to understand.
10. They are infectious, people are drawn to them and want to learn from them.

We will discuss some of these traits more in depth in future segments related to leadership skills.