



# gifted for leadership

## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

This download gives practical advice and perspective for you as you run your women's ministry.



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Click on an article you'd like to read:

**3 INTRODUCTION**

Leading Women

*By JoHannah Reardon*

**5 LEADER'S GUIDE**

How to use this download for a group study.

**6 RAISING UP WOMEN FOR MINISTRY LEADERSHIP: TALES FROM THE TRENCHES**

For my group of women leaders, the real challenge was not getting to a place of vulnerability; it was going beyond

*By Natasha Benevides*

**12 LEVERAGING INFLUENCE IN MINISTRY**

5 scriptural tips for leading from who—and where—you are

*By Jenni Catron*

**17 THE HEART OF A SERVANT LEADER**

We are servants first and leaders second.

*By Jaye Martin*

**20 YOU ARE THE MISSING LINK IN YOUR MINISTRY**

To make an impact with women, we have to be willing to connect on a personal level.

*By Saleama A. Ruvalcaba*

**26 I CAN JUST DO IT MYSELF...BUT SHOULD I?**

Become a delegating leader.

*By Elisabeth K. Corcoran*

**30 FINDING CONTENTMENT IN LEADERSHIP**

The right focus can bring a new perspective.

*By Esther Feng*

**35 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Articles, books, and Bible studies to help you further

Introduction

# Leading Women

*By JoHannah Reardon*



**W**hen I started a women's ministry group in our church plant, I had no idea what I was doing. I tended to run it the way I had run discipleship groups when I was in college ministry, but things didn't translate as smoothly as I would have liked them to.

I had a lot of experience leading women—college women, but no experience leading women who were my peers or older than me. I also tended to set goals and put those goals above the people I was ministering to.

That's why I love this download. It is written by women who have had a lot of experience in women's ministry and who are willing to pass it on to the rest of us. Issues such as vulnerability, having a servant heart, connecting with women on a personal level, and delegating are covered in



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Leading Women

these pages. There is also scriptural encouragement and a plea to learn contentment as we lead.

Use this download to evaluate your own motives so that you will not simply do your job but instead make a lasting impact on those around you.

Blessings,

*JoHannah Reardon*

Contributing Editor for [GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM](http://GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM)

## Leader's Guide

# How to use this download for a group study



**T**his download can be used for individual or group study. If you intend to lead a group study, some simple suggestions follow.

- 1. Make enough copies for everyone in the group to have her own guide.**
- 2. Depending on the time you have dedicated to the study, you might consider distributing the guides before your group meets so everyone has a chance to read the material. Some articles are quite long and could take a while to get through.**
- 3. Alternately, you might consider reading the articles together as a group—out loud—and plan on meeting multiple times.**
- 4. Make sure your group agrees to complete confidentiality. This is essential to getting women to open up.**
- 5. When working through the Reflect questions, be willing to make yourself vulnerable. It's important for women to know that others share their experiences. Make honesty and openness a priority in your group.**
- 6. End the session in prayer.**

# Raising Up Women for Ministry Leadership: Tales from the Trenches



For my group of women leaders, the real challenge was not getting to a place of vulnerability; it was going beyond

*By Natasha Benevides*

**V**ulnerability. Transparency. Authenticity. Words so trail-blazing a scant decade ago are now on the verge of becoming little more than the latest ingredients in a cookie-cutter formula for producing modern-day Christian leaders.

Why would I make such an audacious claim? Because these terms are so ingrained in the day-to-day language of current church development that we're losing sight of the fact that *how* these God-honoring truths are applied is far more important than merely applying them.

Getting raw and real isn't a one-size-fits-all leadership





## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Raising Up Women for Ministry Leadership: Tales from the Trenches

track where we encourage everyone to admit they're flawed, pat each other on the back for being honest, and sing contemporary worship songs to drive home the point that we're different from previous generations.

Never is this need for distinction so clearly evident as it is when raising up a women's ministry team.

Although the triune concept of vulnerability, transparency, and authenticity may be a relatively new approach to ministry leadership, women have been battling *against* these tendencies for decades. For numerous years we've been taught that vulnerability in particular is a close cousin to that killer of female success in ministry—emotions.

Of course, we have excellent role models for how to be both strong yet vulnerable women of faith, through the likes of such teachers as Beth Moore, Joyce Meyer, and others, but these examples are at the 50,000-foot level.

Does that same winning combination translate down into the trenches of day-to-day ministry?

As I discovered firsthand, getting women in leadership to travel to the land of vulnerability was never the real challenge. Guiding them to uncharted territory on the other side was.

### Into the Fray

When the Lord called me to step into the gaping leadership hole left at the heart of our church's women's ministry, there were two vital truths I carried with me—ministry is tough and women cry.

Due to a staffing shortage, the women leading this ministry had been left without an assigned pastor to shepherd them for some time and were now reaching a critical mass. The battle for internal control was crippling their ability to produce fruit for the Kingdom.

God called me to wade into these troubled waters in no uncertain



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Raising Up Women for Ministry Leadership: Tales from the Trenches

terms. I'd be lying if I said I didn't give it a second thought. I had enough on my plate as the pastoral team member overseeing administration and operations, as well as developing a growing marriage ministry team.

But the Lord called and I obeyed. I didn't enter in strategizing about how I could be an authentic person or show my vulnerable side. I didn't fret about what they would think or how I would come off. I dove into the fray on my spiritual knees, begging him for wisdom, grace, and discernment. I simply trusted God to sort it all out. I understood that I was just one of his vessels, and whatever was in me that needed to come out in the process of helping these women grow as leaders was his to use.

### Down to the Bones

He awarded my obedience with discernment. He revealed to me that how I handled these embattled, worn women would define how they would rise from the ashes of a floundering ministry that had been riddled with gossip and backstabbing. My job wasn't to rebuild the ministry; my job was to rebuild the team so *they* could rebuild the ministry.

With a delicate balance of authority and empathy that was impossible to achieve without God's anointing, I had to peel back the shiny happy Christian veneer these women were trapped under to reveal the festering wounds beneath.

Three of the leaders lunged for the exit over the next few weeks.

Five stayed and the process of wading through the ashes of what once was began.

### The Four-Hanky Rule

The very first thing God led me to do was tell these women my story. I told them about the struggles I'd had and the mistakes I'd





## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Raising Up Women for Ministry Leadership: Tales from the Trenches

made and even how in my current role I messed up now and again and was continuously thanking the Lord that he never left my side. I told them that there was no earthly reason why a former teenage mom with a sordid past should be in a position of leadership and trust in a prominent church.

I told them the utter and unvarnished truth about myself and then I told them the utter and unvarnished truth about the lack of spiritual impact their ministry was having. I was passionate and real, but I did not cry.

I wasn't the one who needed the release—they needed it.

As I stepped back and let the five of them begin to pour out their hearts to one another, a beautiful and uniquely female moment emerged. One began to cry and four hankies were immediately drawn from various purses. Four hands offered these little white gestures of grace in perfect unison.

I have dubbed this the "four-hanky rule" for raising up women in leadership. No matter how much discord there may be among sisters in the Lord, a hardened heart is only four hankies away from becoming soft and useable once again.

My joy at witnessing this profound and healing turning point for the team was so overwhelming that it was all I could do to cling to my composure.

### Red Alert! PJs and Chick Flicks

In the majority of cases, women tend to be more emotional than men. So when we really open up we can get lost in the wilderness of our feelings.

This was the predicament I was facing. To be able to share so candidly with my sisters and then witness them reaching out in love when emotion overwhelmed one of them was such a tender experience that I was teetering on the precipice of a full-blown



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Raising Up Women for Ministry Leadership: Tales from the Trenches

warm and fuzzy, *let's put on pajamas and watch chick flicks all night moment.*

A man raising up men can go deep into the land of vulnerability with his team because it is typically a foreign place to the ones being led and so they're quite able to venture out again.

A woman raising up women does not have this luxury. Vulnerability is our home turf. This isn't where we vacation in the summer; this is part of our interior landscape 24/7. So when we realize we're in a safe place and can let that inner reality out, the relief can be so overwhelming that it will readily overtake our original goal—to show our sisters not only how to use this home court advantage with discipline and focus, but to come out of it as stronger leaders.

Had I caved into the genuine vulnerability I was experiencing just then and been completely transparent with my sisters rather than reign it in, they would have enfolded me into their loving circle and the task God had set before me would have gone right off the rails.

### Lesson Learned

Although there is more to the tale of restoring these beleaguered leaders than a couple of meetings and heart-warming hankies, suffice it to say that my greatest lesson learned was this: following God's direction and being equipped by him is the *only* time-proven strategy to success in raising up spiritual leaders. The moment that we reduce his methods to a quick solution, cool slogan or pat formula, we wind up hobbling the very ones we've been called to release.



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Raising Up Women for Ministry Leadership: Tales from the Trenches

*Author and speaker Natasha Benevides is part of the pastoral team at Bramalea Baptist Church and provides oversight to women's ministry, marriage ministry, administration, and operations. She is a certified coach, business manager, and relationship facilitator. This article first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.*

## Reflect

- *The author says, "My job wasn't to rebuild the ministry; my job was to rebuild the team so they could rebuild the ministry." Is that true for you too? If so, how can you begin to think about your team? If not, how can you build your team from a position of strength?*
- *She also says, "No matter how much discord there may be among sisters in the Lord, a hardened heart is only four hankies away from becoming soft and useable once again." Have you experienced that truth in ministry? How might that happen with your current ministry team?*
- *How might the emotion of vulnerability take over the goals of helping your team become disciplined and focused leaders? How can you help them move past the emotion to this desired goal?*
- *Are you tempted to get to the "quick solution, cool slogan or pat formula"? If so, how can you move to something deeper and more life changing?*

# Leveraging Influence in Ministry

5 scriptural tips for leading from who—and where—you are

*By Jenni Catron*



“**W**hat do you want to be when you grow up?”

I bet you remember being asked that question when you were a little girl. Odds are that you ask the same question of the little people in your life today. So much hope and optimism is behind that question, so much potential still waiting to be unleashed.

But somewhere along life's journey, that question probably became less hopeful. The demands and pressures of real life began to dictate what we ought to do rather than what we long to do. The expectations of others, our mistakes, and our experiences shaped us, often leaving us with little hope of achieving those childhood dreams we once were brave enough to voice.

Something deep inside each of us longs to count. We want



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Leveraging Influence in Ministry

to matter to the world. We long to make a difference. We get bored, tired, even depressed by routine and monotony. We're desperate for significance. We're searching for acknowledgment. We beam when someone says, "You matter." We seek praise, accolades, and awards, but somehow once we achieve them, they feel empty and we move on to another desperate search for the next fix that will affirm our worth.

### A specific purpose

You are specifically designed to impact the world in a way that no one else can. You have a specific purpose—a calling that only you are qualified to fulfill. And as leaders in ministry, the way you steward your influence not only impacts you, but it impacts all those you lead.

We were made to influence others. God designed us to live in community with one another and by simple proximity we are influencing the people around us. Each one of us has a sphere of influence that God has entrusted to us. We have the amazing privilege of partnering with God to positively impact the lives of others.

### Leveraging your influence

Several years ago I went through a difficult season of ministry where I was struggling with my sense of purpose and questioning how God intended to use my gifts. That season, which I refer to as my "crisis of purpose," led me to Scripture:

Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that. Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others. Each of you must take responsibility for doing the

creative best you can with your own life. –Galatians 6:4–5  
(The Message)

This Scripture passage unpacked a process that was essential for me to gain a better understanding of how to leverage my influence for God's glory.

***1. "Make a careful exploration of who you are."***

"Who you are" is your identity in Christ. It's not your title. It's not your accomplishments. It is who you are simply as a child of God. This is foundational to our faith, and yet so often we become distracted by the layers of expectations heaped upon us that we miss the truth that our core identity is to be a child of God.

***2. "Make a careful exploration of . . . the work you have been given."***

God has given you a purpose to fulfill, but it won't always look exactly the way you expect. The work you've been given is a calling that is core to who you are—it's not specific to a job or place of employment. The work you've been given is the combination of gifts, talents, and opportunities that have shaped your life thus far. That collection is unique to you. These experiences can equip you to influence others in specific and purposeful ways. They enable you to relate to and pour into the lives of those you influence.

***3. "Then sink yourself into that."***

To "sink" means "to become engulfed." When we begin to get a healthy understanding of our identity as a child of God and embrace the tools he has given us to impact the world, our next responsibility is to sink ourselves wholeheartedly into that identity because God has plans to use us.





## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Leveraging Influence in Ministry

#### ***4. "Don't be impressed with yourself. Don't compare yourself with others."***

These two statements are a neon warning sign to us. Right about the time we begin to gain confidence in our calling, the enemy comes along with distractions. It's often pride and comparison as this verse suggests, but it can also be jealousy, insecurity, fear, control, or temptation. Where does the enemy seek to derail you? Watch for it and protect yourself from it.

#### ***5. "Each of you must take responsibility for doing the creative best you can with your own life."***

This statement of hope and possibility is reminiscent of our childhood dreams. We are called to do our "creative best." We are stewards of all that God has entrusted to us. He has equipped us in ways that are unique to our personality and life story. We get to partner with God to use our influence to further his influence.

### **Lead from your sphere of influence**

When you truly understand how uniquely God has designed you and how specifically he has equipped you, you will thrive. Your God-given influence is a gift to you and others. People are counting on you to lead from your place of influence. God is counting on you to lead from your place of influence. We need you to be you—all of you, without holding anything back.

It's an enormous treasure to have the opportunity to use our influence for ministry.

Do your creative best. Don't try to mimic what everyone else is doing. Make the careful exploration for yourself. Discern what God's unique calling looks like for your life as a leader and pursue it relentlessly. And the next time you ask a child,



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Leveraging Influence in Ministry

"What do you want to be when you grow up," it will be rooted in the secure hope that comes from a careful exploration.

*Jenni Catron is the author of **Clout: Discover and Unleash Your God-Given Influence** (Thomas Nelson 2014). Her passion is to lead well and to inspire, equip, and encourage others to do the same. Jenni blogs at [www.JenniCatron.com](http://www.JenniCatron.com). For more information on Clout, go to [www.DiscoverClout.com](http://www.DiscoverClout.com). This article first appeared on [TODAYSCHRISTIANWOMAN.COM](http://TODAYSCHRISTIANWOMAN.COM).*

## Reflect

- *"Make a careful exploration of who you are." Who are you in Christ? Take time to think about this and meditate on **Galatians 6:4-5**.*
- *"Make a careful exploration of . . . the work you have been given." How has what God called you to do unique to you? What can you bring to this task that no one else can in the same way? What experiences equip you to serve?*
- *How can you "sink" yourself into the work God has called you to do?*
- *How have you been comparing yourself to others? What will help you avoid doing that?*
- *How can you do your creative best in this ministry?*

# The Heart of a Servant Leader

We are servants first  
and leaders second.

*By Jaye Martin*



**T**he heart is the very seat of our soul, our emotions, and our passions. It is the very essence of our being and that which drives our thoughts and our motives. No wonder God tells us to guard our hearts (**Prov. 4:23**).

The heart of a leader is the foundation of his or her life. It is what drives her passion for the Lord and her passion for service in the kingdom. No doubt most of us feel called to lead in a deep way from the bottom of our hearts.

And yet, with seemingly little notice, out of our hearts can spew some of the most ungodly thoughts and attitudes—even in the midst of ministry. It was only a few weeks ago that something happened to totally unnerve me. Surely you know the feeling. I was less than thrilled with a situation (and in particular with one of many bosses) and was just about to share from the seat of my emotions the most spirit-filled reaction to what was happening when God intervened.

The person was not there for me to share with! And now I



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### The Heart of a Servant Leader

thank God for that. My spirit-filling was not coming from God; it was coming from the enemy. Even though I felt righteous in my motive, it certainly was not the best way to handle things. As leaders, we must be constantly aware that the enemy will do everything he can to render us ineffective in service to our Lord.

I had to come before the Lord and pray to him, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).

"Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name" (Ps. 86:11). "Refresh my heart in Christ" (Pm. 1:20b). God gave me his promise in response,

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).

To be a servant leader, we need to keep in mind that we are servants first and leaders second. We must learn to model Christ-like servanthood in every situation. God has chosen us to lead. Not only must we be strong and do the work, we must be strong in our wholehearted devotion to him and remember who we are working for! He is in control of every situation.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col. 3:23-24).

*Jaye Martin serves as director of women's leadership at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) in Louisville, Kentucky; adapted from GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.*



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### The Heart of a Servant Leader

## Reflect

- ◉ *What does it look like to be a servant first and a leader second? Is this something you consciously think about in your ministry?*
- ◉ *How does servanthood relate to your call to leadership?*
- ◉ *When your emotions take over, do you take them to God first or spew them onto others?*
- ◉ *Meditate on all the Scripture passages in this article and relate them to your current situation.*

# You Are the Missing Link in Your Ministry



To make an impact with women, we have to be willing to connect on a personal level.

*By Saleama A. Ruvalcaba*

**Y**ou spend hours planning meetings, trying to put together wonderful events for the women in your church with the hope of helping them live productive Christian lives. Yet time and again, they don't show up. Your leaders have done all they can to get the women in church excited and nothing seems to be working. You've prayed and you've fasted and the only logical conclusion left is to dissolve women's ministry altogether—after all, there's no need to separate men and women; Jesus didn't appoint a director of women's ministry to assist him in feeding the five thousand.

In **Everyone Communicates, Few Connect**, John C. Maxwell illustrates the points of success, which boil down to connection. How well we connect is the foundation that relationships are built on, and that includes relationships





## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### You Are the Missing Link in Your Ministry

with our spouses, children, co-workers, business partners, and people in ministry. If we want to make an impact we have to be willing to connect on a personal level.

### Something Is Missing

A while ago, I attended a church that produced weekly bulletin announcements for the congregation. I would often respond, with much anticipation, to requests for people to serve in women's ministry. However, my anticipation turned to aggravation while I waited for responses. I finally contacted the church secretary to find out why I was not hearing from anyone, and I was told it was due to the busyness of the year. Okay, I can certainly understand busy seasons at church; however, I was slightly confused as to why announcements were created, printed, and distributed if no one was prepared to respond to people interested in serving.

Communication gaps appear when we do not make ourselves available to people. I formed an opinion about this particular church as I felt they weren't compassionate, and my desire to participate in events, outside of regular service, began to fade. Jesus may not have appointed a women's ministry director during his day, but he also did not sit in coordination meetings. He was often on his way somewhere when he was stopped by people who wanted prayer, healing, or deliverance, and he took the time to connect with them. Jesus blessed the woman caught in the act of adultery, he spoke to the woman at the well, he healed the woman crippled for 18 years, and he freed the woman of her 12-year issue of blood.

### Social Media Taught Me a Few Things

As social media have grown, I have attempted to indulge in them myself. I have a Facebook account, and I recently started a blog



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### You Are the Missing Link in Your Ministry

and tried my hand at Twitter—again. I tried Twitter five times prior and each time deactivated the account because I did not understand how to use it. For this latest attempt, I decided to study the "how to" section Twitter offers to learn how to increase my followers. At the same time, I started a blog and decided to study the "how to" section as well—and to my complete surprise, both "how to" sections emphasized the same point: connection.

If I wanted my Twitter account to grow, I had to connect with others: re-tweet a great post and comment as well. Prior to my reading the "how to" on Twitter, I had a solid 49 followers for two weeks. After following the advice, within one week the number jumped to 130. That's 81 more followers I can potentially reach with my ministry. I followed the same advice for my blog. I started reading other blogs and commenting specifically on what they wrote to inspire them and let them know they inspired me. Within one month I had more than 50 subscribers. Once I decided to reach out to others, I saw my ministry grow. Prior to this, I was sitting back waiting for everyone to comment on my wonderful blog and follow me on Twitter simply because I have a wonderful ministry.

It is my belief that the Lord prefers we not deactivate our ministries and instead learn how to bridge the gap. The Christian homeschool group of which I am a board member has weekly outings for kids and parents to socialize. On a recent outing at the playground, a mother I did not recognize arrived with her children, and I assumed the mother would join the group as we were seated directly in front of her. As I began chatting again, I spotted her sitting on the opposite side of the park—alone. Maybe she wasn't there for our group, I thought, but I decided to walk over and ask. Turned out she was there to



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### You Are the Missing Link in Your Ministry

meet us; she was new to homeschooling and new to our group. I invited her to sit with us and introduced her to everyone, and before long she had begun conversing with others. Had I not been aware of her or gotten up to see if she was with our group, she more than likely would have left feeling very discouraged.

I am a very shy person, and had this incident occurred a few years earlier, I would have been too concerned with looking foolish and would not have reached out this mother. I would have decided that if she wanted to join us, she could make her way over to us. However, I now understand the importance of connecting as a leader and I put my feelings aside to reach out. We all have a desire to belong, and on that day this mother needed to belong. The women in your ministry would love for you to go out of your way for them to belong.

### Leave a Legacy

In *Leadership Is an Art*, Max De Pree explains that the signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers. Are the women you're serving reaching their potential? Are they learning, growing, serving, and graceful? If you've put forth the effort to connect, these questions can easily be answered. However, if you're constantly behind a door not allowing anyone in, you should not be surprised by lack of participation. Events get planned based on great ideas or based on what another church is doing, instead of planning events based on the needs within the body. We are often doing all we can to pull women in, yet doing very little to put ourselves out. Enjoy an afternoon snack with women other than those in leadership, show support by attending *their* events, let them know about your journey with Christ—be vulnerable. Give them hope for their future.



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### You Are the Missing Link in Your Ministry

You may have great vision for your ministry, but vision alone won't erect change. Vision met with passion for your women to live in victory will stimulate the benevolence missing in leadership. Jesus wasn't waiting for people to flock to his side; instead he was out walking—in the sun, in the dirt, up the hills, changing lives forever. He ate with sinners, touched the leprous, opened the eyes of the blind. He continuously put himself in position to connect with people so they could live in victory. When you demonstrate you care for your women, they will respond by caring for you. You will get to know their needs, and then God's ministry will grow.

Dream big and look beyond what you see right in front of you. The women's ministry you lead will leave a legacy and it's up to you what kind of legacy. Will it leave a legacy in which women feel depressed, discouraged, and hurt, never knowing how amazing Jesus is? Or will your ministry's legacy be so powerful that souls are saved each week? Women will be sold out for Jesus: praying relentlessly for their husbands, friends, families, neighborhoods, cities, schools, government—so strong and powerful that the Lord comes and breaks the chains that once held people bound. All because of you and your willingness to step down from the leadership ladder to *connect*—and make a difference.

*Saleama A. Ruvalcaba is a Memphis-based writer and speaker. She is a wife to Omar, mother of four, home educator and Bible student. She writes devotions on her blog at <http://www.salruv7.com>. This article first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.*



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

You Are the Missing Link in Your Ministry

### Reflect

- *What is your ministry style? Are you available to people or do you wall yourself away?*
- *How can you begin to communicate your vision with your women's ministry team in a way that they will understand it?*
- *How might you connect with women beyond your ministry team?*

# I Can Just Do It Myself... but Should I?

Become a delegating leader.

*By Elisabeth K. Corcoran*



I am a control freak, like many women in ministry. When I began the women's ministry at my sweet church, I tried to do everything on my own, for many reasons. I enjoyed every aspect of ministry, of building something from the ground up. I was wired up with spiritual gifts in leadership, administration, and creative communication. I didn't want to burden anyone. And let's be honest, sometimes one person can get the job done—or get all the jobs done—much faster than explaining it to someone else or waiting for people to get back to you.

So in other words, I was selfish and prideful. In my defense, I was young and thought I was doing people a favor. And God. ("Look at me doing all this for you, Lord! See how much I love you to stay up this late? You're *welcome!*")

As the years went by and I grew in my leadership, I realized that the way I was doing things not only wasn't





## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### I Can Just Do It Myself...but Should I?

working, but wasn't beneficial for me—I'd be burning out very quickly. But my major motivation to make some changes came when I ran across **Ephesians 4:11-12**: "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up**" (NIV, emphasis mine).

I'd read this before, I'm sure. But one day it hit me between the eyes. My main task as a leader was not to do ministry. This was a shocking revelation to me. My main task as a leader was to equip others to do ministry. Why? So they may be built up. This changed everything for me. This changed how I built my team, what tasks I kept doing, and what I let go of.

I began with baby steps. I had to. It was as if someone had to pry my fingers off the entire ministry. *This is my baby!* I thought on more than one occasion, completely forgetting that in actuality, it was God's and not mine.

### Who Are You and What Do You Want To Do?

I started by bringing my team together and doing a brief spiritual gifts survey, along with talking through their areas of passion. This was humbling to me because it showed me that I didn't know my women as well as I had thought, and I was basically using them to fill in holes. I was, in essence, saying to them, "I don't care that you don't like to use e-mail and you hate cooking; I really need someone to schedule all the hospitality needs for this coming year." When I found out that two-thirds of my ladies didn't have a passion for women, but were instead passionate for children's ministry or prayer or music, I was blown away. But I needed to know this. From this place of truth, I could build a team of women who wanted to be there. And I could steer the others into areas of better fit rather than trying to pigeonhole them as I had been.



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### I Can Just Do It Myself...but Should I?

#### Can I Trust You with My Baby?

Another small step I took was actually letting go. I intentionally gave away pieces of the ministry that I had held onto so tightly, for so long. I remember handing over the monthly newsletter to an eager teammate. Being a writer and a stickler for grammar and spelling, this practically killed me, but I knew I had to die to self in some areas, so I started there. I coached her then let her go. The morning of the first event after she had taken over, as we were placing the newsletters next to everyone's plate, I glanced over it. Typos galore. I wanted to scream. Instead, I thanked her for her hard work, and after the event, we talked through a system that would make the next issue better. A dear friend even came up to me afterward and said, "I know this is killing you. I'm so proud of you for handling this so graciously." If she only knew how I was feeling on the inside. But it takes a long time to change a habit, to change an attitude.

#### Will You Even Notice if I Stop?

My final step put my team and the women in my church to the test. I just stopped doing some things that I had been doing for years. I knew one of two things would happen. Either no one would even notice and I would know I had been wasting my time; or someone—to whom that ministry mattered—would step up and fill the hole.

Both of these things happened. No one said a word about my weekly email no longer showing up in inboxes with the upcoming women's ministry events, so I never started sending it out again. And when there wasn't enough protein at one of our breakfasts (yes, someone actually complained about that... welcome to ministry), I told her kindly that she could bring it next time if she really wanted it.



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### I Can Just Do It Myself...but Should I?

It took me several years to get to a place of feeling like the women's ministry was not "Beth's ministry" but truly belonged to all the women of our church. By the time I handed over the reins, I felt as if I were ready to walk away because I had trained up many good women, who were serving in their areas of passion and giftedness, who had ownership over our mission and plans. It turns out, I couldn't do it all myself. And I never was supposed to anyway.

*Elisabeth K. Corcoran started and led the women's ministry at her church for 10 years, then went on to other church ministry roles. She is the author of five books, including At the Corner of Broken & Love: Where God Meets Us in the Everyday (Westbow). [www.elisabethcorcoran.com](http://www.elisabethcorcoran.com)*

## Reflect

- *Are you tempted to just do things yourself, or are you good at delegating?*
- *How can you learn to trust others with your vision for ministry?*
- *What steps can you take to begin to let others take responsibility for the ministry?*

# Finding Contentment in Leadership

The right focus can bring a new perspective.

*By Esther Feng*



**F**resh out of college and full of hope, enthusiasm, and confidence, I was ready to change the world, one pimply teenager at a time. As the school year crawled by, the demands of teaching 125 high school students wore on my optimism. Those kids seemed impervious to my influence, and there were so many things I needed to change to get my classroom running more smoothly.

By Christmas break, I was a disgruntled teacher battling a serious case of discontentment (and considering a new line of work!).

Leadership, both in ministry and at home, can leave us with a bad case of discontentment as well. Seeing what could be done better is the hallmark of an effective leader, but the constant focus on what's wrong can also lead to unhappiness.



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Finding Contentment in Leadership

Instead of seeing what God can do, we see what's not possible. Rather than noticing the resources God's given us, we see only what we lack. We're blind to our team's strengths.

It's easy to excuse discontentment in the name of responsibility. After all, you don't want to become complacent. You're just trying to make things better!

But Scripture's challenge to find contentment in all circumstances doesn't exclude leaders. Here are a few practical things you can do to take hold of contentment, even as it tries to escape your grasp.

***Start networking.*** I was in the throes of starting a new women's ministry. The day-to-day, week-to-week responsibilities overwhelmed me. Tending to the urgent narrowed my focus, and after a few months of bleary-eyed leadership, I suffered from leadership myopia. All I could see was what was wrong with our church, our women, and my team. Leading wasn't fun, to say the least.

I decided to reach out to a friend who had been doing women's ministry for several years. As we talked over hot coffee, I realized my struggles were normal, common, and certainly not something worth losing the joy of leading over. My friend gave me a few ministry suggestions, and a sense of peace returned.

Networking with leaders in similar positions broadens your view of leadership. Are you in women's ministry? Talk to a leader from a different church. Are your kids your primary sphere of influence? Find other moms to connect with. Do you make an impact in the workplace? Look for people who are in the same field to share ideas. Building relationships and exchanging ideas with others staves off the loneliness that can



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Finding Contentment in Leadership

creep into a leader's heart and provides solutions for the challenges you face.

***Make a list.*** I struggled with challenge after challenge while planning a leadership event. The website was down—again! The volunteers I was supposed to be organizing refused to be wrangled. The host church almost backed out two days before the event.

Frustration mounted as I began feeling overworked and underappreciated, ignored and forgotten. In an attempt to "verbally process" my feelings, I unloaded my discontentment on my husband, my mother, my friend, my neighbor. Instead of making me feel better, venting only fueled my unhappiness.

I eventually got tired of listening to my own voice and begrudgingly took my mother's advice to "be thankful." With an impatient heart, I started a list of things that had gone right in ministry the last few months:

I had a strong team of faithful leaders.

A woman discovered a relationship with Jesus.

Children heard the gospel.

A difficult marriage turned a corner.

A mom who was scared to lead stepped up to try something new.

So often we become unhappy in leadership because we wonder if God is doing anything. The lack of growth and progress seems like evidence that we're working harder than God.

The simple act of enumerating successes in ministry and leadership, no matter how small, gives evidence that God is





## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Finding Contentment in Leadership

still faithfully working. Catching a glimpse of God's hand in your work and ministry can help you find peace in the midst of the onslaught of needs. Besides, don't you think God deserves a little praise for what he's doing?

***Stop doing it all.*** If you're a leader, you're probably pretty capable. "I can do it" can quickly become "I *need* to do it—no one else will!" Doing it all leads to dissatisfaction. When we take someone else's calling, their blessing becomes our burden. Not only do we rob them of the joy of serving, we've given ourselves yet another reason to be dissatisfied, whether it's feeling overworked, ill-equipped, or overscheduled.

Ironically, sometimes the job I steal is God's. In my zeal to foster spiritual growth, I try to cajole, manipulate, or control someone into growing closer to God. As the apostle Paul reminds us, only Christ can grow a person's heart. My job is merely to cultivate the soil, plant the seed, or water a seedling.

As leaders, we look for the big picture. But seeing all the pieces can be heavy and sometimes feel like a curse. Ask the Lord for clarity and courage for what he'd like you to do each day, so you can focus on the part God has for you.

I'm happy to report that Christmas vacation, over a decade ago, did not mark the end of my teaching career. The week off gave me an opportunity to see teaching with fresh eyes and savor all the wonderful conversations I had shared with my students. Dinner with a close friend buoyed my spirits as we traded first-year teacher stories. Though the demands of being a science teacher had not changed, I found contentment.

In the same way, the challenges of leadership will never go away. There are more people to tell about Jesus, more hearts need to be healed, and things can always be done more



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Finding Contentment in Leadership

efficiently. Rediscovering the contentment God has for us will help us carry the easy yoke he promises.

*Esther Feng is a freelance writer who lives in Central New York with her husband and two daughters. A former high school science teacher, she currently serves as Development Communications Coordinator for MOPS International. This article first appeared on [GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM](http://GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM).*

## Reflect

- *How can you begin to network with others who are in ministry?*
- *List the things that have gone right in this ministry so far.*
- *"Ask the Lord for clarity and courage for what he'd like you to do each day, so you can focus on the part God has for you."*

# Additional Resources

Articles, books, and Bible studies to help you further



## Articles

**Christian Women Need to Know Their History**—By celebrating the stories of generations before us, we better understand our own. By Hannah Anderson, available on [ChristianityToday.com](http://ChristianityToday.com).

**Don't Let Women's Ministry Turn People Into Projects**—The quest for mentorship to benefit us both. By Michelle Van Loon, available on [ChristianityToday.com](http://ChristianityToday.com).

**What Women's Ministry Can Be**—I finally learned about identity, mission, and worth. By Amy Jackson, available on [TodaysChristianWoman.com](http://TodaysChristianWoman.com).

## Books

**The Team That Jesus Built: How to Develop, Equip, and Commission a Women's Ministry Team** by Janet Thompson (New Hope Publishers, 2011). Jesus built strong teams. You can too. Get his methods, answers, and more for team-building



## Leading a Women's Ministry Team

### Additional Resources

challenges most leaders encounter: How do you motivate people to serve selflessly? How do you equip people to be new leaders? How do you "let go" as a leader? Based on the author's experience building the women's ministry at Saddleback Church, California, under the leadership of pastor Rick Warren.

### **Building an Effective Women's Ministry: Develop a Plan—Gather a Team—Watch God Work** by Sharon Jaynes

(Harvest House, 2005). Want to develop a dynamic women's ministry—but don't know where to start? Jaynes answers your questions and offers the planning tools and confidence-builders you need to succeed. Learn how to identify your mission, develop a team, plan a budget, avoid burnout, achieve balance, and create programs that nurture, reach out, and revive.

## Online Resources

### **Assess the Effectiveness of Your Women's Ministry—**

Use these assessment forms to help you and your team discern whether you are truly helping women in your women's ministry. Available from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**.

**Fresh Ideas for Women's Ministry**—Tools for evangelism, discipleship, and mentoring. Available from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**.

**Encouragement to Persevere**—This devotional booklet can give perspective when you are weary of ministry. Available from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**.

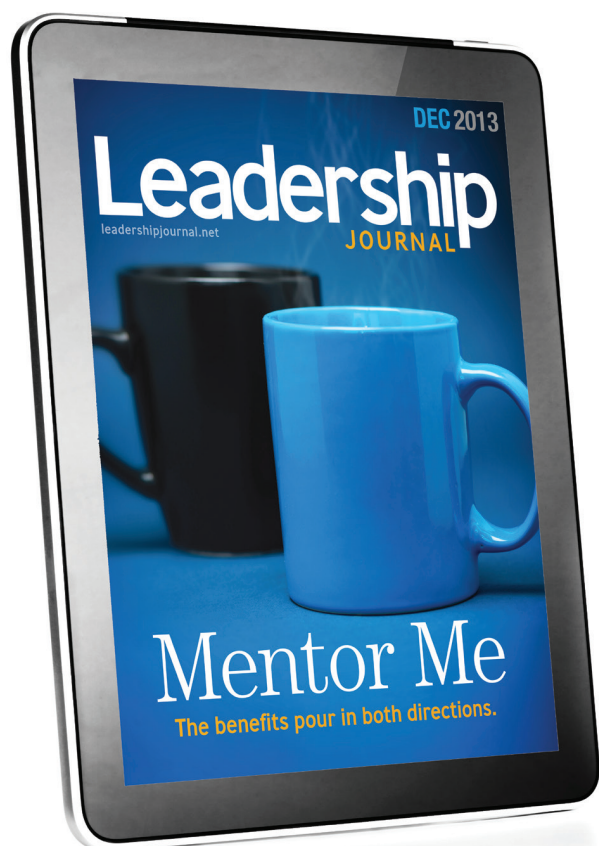
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