

Spiritual Mothering

Susan Hunt: My name is Susan Hunt, and the title of this seminar is “Spiritual Mothering: The Titus 2 Mandate for Women Mentoring Women.”

My plan is that we will just talk about the “why” of mentoring, of Titus 2 spiritual mothering, the biblical reasons for it. Then I will give you a model of one way it can be done in a local church, and then I hope that we can do some Q & A. I think our group is small enough that we can do that. So, as we move on through, if you have questions, just jot them down, and then we’ll have time for you to ask those questions.

Let’s go to the Lord and commit this time to Him before we begin.

Father in Heaven, how I thank You for the great privilege of being here at this conference and with these women. I thank You for these that You have put upon their hearts a desire to understand and to implement Your calling for us in Titus 2.

Oh Lord, how I pray that You will just give me the words. You have birthed the passion in my heart for this concept, and, Father, I pray that I will speak clearly. But above all, Lord, I pray that Your Holy Spirit will take the feebleness of my words, will accompany them and plant Your word into the heart of these women and bring forth the gospel fruit that You have for them.

Father, I thank You for each one of them. I thank You for their love for You and for their desire to serve You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

If you will look at your handout, we want to begin thinking about the Titus 2 mandate. On your handout you have Titus 2:1-5:

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. . . . Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Now, I know you heard a lot about Titus 2 last night, and I also want you to take Mary Kassian’s message this morning, and now let’s just build on all of that. So this is just going to be an extension as we move specifically into the area of verses 3-5.

One of the first things we need to understand as we think about Titus 2 is that it really stands along with four other passages in the letters to Timothy and Titus that give us principles for women’s ministry in the local church, and I say that women’s ministry collectively as well as our individual ministries as women in the church.

In the book, *Women’s Ministry in the Local Church*, we unpack these principles. So I’m not going into them now except for you to see that Titus 2 is one of those principles. The principles

are for women serving in the church: ecclesiastical submission, compassion, community, gender-specific discipleship, and Scripture.

Now if you are in charge of women's ministry in your church, if you want to understand all of those principles and how they work together, again, the book *Women's Ministry in the Local Church*, as well as this resource notebook will help you in implementing this in your women's ministry. On the brochure you have all of these resources listed.

Now we come to principle number four, which is general-specific discipleship. We need to see that in light of what Scripture says about discipleship. One of the difficulties with verses 3-5 is that so often people lift it out and see it isolated from the rest of that chapter and from the rest of Scripture. They will come up with models of ministry that really are not flowing out of the passage as a whole. We want to be careful that we don't do that, that we're rooted firmly in what God says.

First of all, we need to see that an overarching theme of Scripture is the theme of discipleship. All through Scripture, in the Old Testament, over and over and over God says to His people that one generation is to tell the next generation the praise-worthy deeds of the Lord. I call that the Old Testament Great Commission because it's repeated so often.

Then we come to the New Testament, and Jesus expands that Great Commission and says, "Now go into the world." You continue to **tell your own children, the children within the covenant community, but you go into the world and make disciples.**

Then we come to Titus 2, and we see that Great Commission is made gender specific. Not all discipleship is gender specific, but some discipleship is gender specific. **As we look at that particular calling of Titus 2:3-5, we need to see that it is one part of the whole of our calling to be making disciples.**

I call this spiritual mothering because it is a nurturing ministry. I love Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel but our own lives as well" (2:8). As we get into really unpacking verses 3-5, that's what it's about: sharing not only the gospel, but our own lives as well because we love one another.

Now we come to Titus 2, which is a chapter on discipleship. I want us to see seven principles of discipleship in this chapter that impact how we do one-on-one or small-group ministry, women-to-women ministry.

The first principle is ecclesiastical authority and responsibility. The chapter opens: "You must teach" (verse 1). Who is this written to? It's written to the pastor, the male leadership of that church. So this Titus 2 mandate to women is really a mandate to the church. The church is to call out and equip women as well as all other people in the congregation.

The practical implication of this is that **our woman-to-woman ministries are to be under the oversight and the authority of the leadership of the church, but they are also to be seen as one part of the total ministry of the church.** A women's mentoring ministry is not to sit off

here in its own orbit, but it is to be one part of the whole. It's not the only place women will be discipled, and we need to understand that.

So often we seem to think that we've got to do it all. We don't. Women are discipled from the pulpit. They're discipled in Sunday school classes. They're discipled in many places in church life. This is one segment of that discipleship, and it's to be under the oversight and integrated with the entire ministry of the church.

The second principle is teach "sound doctrine." The word *sound* is a key word in this letter. It means "whole and healthy." This is doctrine that is consistent with all of Scripture. It is teaching the whole counsel of God in a manner consistent with what every other part of God's Word says.

Now, this does not mean that in our Titus 2 ministries that we have to teach the whole counsel of God. We are to teach the particular parts assigned to us, but the total church ministry should be teaching that coordinated system of doctrine that presents the full story of redemption.

Our discipleship of women is to be consistent with the sound doctrine that is preached from the pulpit. It is to take that sound doctrine and help women push it out into their relationships, their lives, their situations.

The third principle we see in Titus 2 is the communion of the saints. If you read through this chapter (which we will not do right now), you see this wonderful interaction of the older men, the younger men, the older women, the younger women. This is a profile of a local congregation. What it says is that discipleship is not only to be done by the pastor, by the male leaders, but there's to be life-on-life discipleship among the people. We're to be involved with one another's lives.

Discipleship is relational. How did Jesus disciple? He called them to be with Him. He spent time with them. That's what we're called to do, as Paul says in Thessalonians: "I was delighted to share not just the gospel, but my very life" (2:8) That's what discipleship is.

I love this quote from the *Historic Confession of Faith*, and it's from the chapter of the Communion of the Saints: "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by His Spirit and by faith have fellowship with Him and His grace, suffering, death, resurrection, and glory . . ." Notice that there is not a period there. So often we think it's about me and Jesus, but it's also about me and Jesus and you.

You remember Cain's famous words? "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Yes, you are. **In the family of God, we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers**, and the Westminster Divines did not put a period at this point in this paragraph.

What they're saying to us is, "If you're united to Jesus, you're also united to one another in love, have communion in each other's gifts and graces and are obliged [that's a strong word—are obliged] to the performance of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good both in the inward and outward man."

When we begin talking about investing in women, we're talking about this concept of the communion of the saints, that, because we're joined to Christ, we're joined to one another. We're actually obliged to share our gifts and graces—the gifts of our understandings, the gifts of our experiences, and the graces that God has worked into our lives. That's what Titus 2:3-5 is all about, sharing those gifts and graces with one another.

Some parts of this discipleship, as I've said, will be gender specific, and then in verses 2-10, we see that the gospel has a redemptive transforming influence in the lives of believers. We need to keep this principle firmly in mind. **It is the gospel that will transform those we may be mentoring.**

If you look down in this passage, we see that as the gospel is proclaimed, as people are living out the gospel in their relationships with one another, older men become sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled; sound in faith, love, and steadfastness. Older women become reverent. Young women become lovers of husbands and children, self-controlled and pure. Young men become self-controlled.

As this maturity begins to settle in, as sound doctrine is preached, as sound doctrine is applied into life as we help one another, then a maturity settles into us that impacts our church life. Church life becomes more mature, and, you see, that is what Jesus prayed for us. In John 17 Jesus prayed, "The glory that You have given Me, I have given to them" (verse 24).

Jesus has deposited His glory in us. Why? "That they may be one even as we are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one" (see verse 21). Jesus' prayer is that there would be communion of the saints, unity of the saints, a unity that reflects the unity of the Trinity.

What's going to happen when that takes place? "Then the world will know You sent Me and loved them as You have loved Me" (see verse 21). **Our unity in Christ shouts the gospel. Our unity in our marriages and our unity in our churches shouts the gospel.**

As this happens, as this unity spills out from our churches and moves out into our communities, we see the fifth principle: **The gospel has a redemptive transforming influence on culture.**

I want you to get the big picture of what's involved with verses 3-5. This is how it works itself out.

In verse 4, we see that as women are living according to our calling, no one will dishonor the Word of God. That is an astounding statement. I don't fully understand it, but **as we become true women, true reflections of our creation, design, and redemptive calling, God's Word will be honored.**

Verse 8: As men live out their calling, even those who oppose the gospel will be ashamed because, in all honesty, they will have nothing bad to say.

In verse 10: As slaves or employees live out their calling in the marketplace, the teaching about God our Savior will be attractive.

So that's what's involved with verse 3-5, but there's more.

The sixth principle is the gospel is the motivation. I want you to wrap your hearts and minds around this principle. There are costly challenges in this chapter. Sharing our lives with younger women is costly. Younger women learning from older women is costly. It requires time. It requires energy. It requires relational risk.

We're called to love each other in radical ways, to share our gifts and graces with each other in radical ways, and it is not always easy.

We have twelve grandchildren. Two of those are little girls who were born ten weeks apart. These two little cousins seem to have known from birth that there was something special going on in their relationship, that they were in their mothers' wombs at the same time; they're cousins. It just seems to be quite wonderful.

They're seven now, but what I'm going to tell you happened when I think they were four or five.

Heather is a very talkative little girl. She loves anything pink and frilly. Maggie is very shy, very quiet, does not like the pink and the frills. She's much happier in her cutoff jeans and her tee shirt. They're so different, but they love each other in a profound way.

One day we were all going to a park for a picnic and these little girls were riding with Maggie's dad. They were in the back seat of the van. When they got to the park, the two little girls jumped out of the van, holding hands, and they skipped to the playground. Our son-in-law came over, just laughing, and he told us this story that as they were riding along, Heather was chattering away with one of her stories. After a while Maggie said, "Don't talk so much. You make my ears hurt." To which Heather responded, "I knew the day was coming when you would annoy me."

(Laughter)

She's always been just a bit too smart for herself. Maggie began wailing. I asked her dad, "But they just jumped out of the van. What happened?"

He said, "Oh, after I comforted Maggie down, they were okay."

Here's the point: The day's coming when you will annoy me, and the day's coming when I will annoy you, but we're sisters. There's something very special going on between us. We're connected in a very profound way. If the gospel is our motivation for getting involved in each other's lives, then we will find a way to join hands and to skip out to the playground.

The motivation for doing this is not for the payback we will get. If that is your motivation, you will not last long because many times there is no payback, and she will annoy you to death. The motivation is in verse 11 and 13: "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all

men. . . . We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Jesus has come; He is coming back. That’s the gospel, and what we’re to do in the middle time is to be making disciples. As women, part of that disciple-making is that we are to be investing in the lives of other women.

A woman told me that she had invested in a woman for about three years, and she said, “I’m just distraught. She has bolted. She has left our church. She’s just ignored everything I ever told her. I poured so much into her life. I don’t know if I will ever get over this.”

She was far too tender for me to say anything to her at that point, but do you see that her motivation was not the gospel? Her motivation, at some level, was either holding that woman in their church, or . . . I don’t know what her motivation was. But **if our motivation is the gospel, then we can trust God with the outcome and the results, and we may not ever see the fruit. We may; we may not. The fruit may come after we’re in heaven**, but if our motivation is the gospel, we do it because He has come, and He’s coming back for us.

The seventh principle is that **the gospel is the power. It is not up to us to transform women.** That is the power of the gospel.

Verse 14: “Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

Do you see the “us-ness” of the gospel there? He’s speaking here as us as His people, and he is saying that He is the one who is purifying us. He is the one who is getting His Bride ready.

But let me just tell you: Every time I think about this, I’m left breathless as I consider that each time I obey Him and invest in another woman, I’m actually helping to get the Bride ready. But even better: Whether she responds to Him or not, some of the wrinkles are being smoothed away from my own life, and oftentimes I need women who will not respond to my ministry to them for deeper wrinkles to be smoothed out. It really reveals whether or not my motivation is really the gospel.

Titus 2:3-5 is one part of this glorious whole. Now, as we zoom in on those verses, just a few points about that: Older women and younger women. Usually, the first question is: “Who is who? Who is the older and who are the younger?”

I turned 70 in January, and, by the way, it is a wonderful age. Somehow that morning I woke up, and I felt like I was way up at level 70 on the mountain, and I haven’t quite gotten over the view yet. I have told our children and grandchildren so many times that day I seemed to look back over all of my life, and the thing that I couldn’t stop saying is, “Every single part was good.”

Was it hard? Yes. Was it painful? Yes. Was it dark at times? Yes. **But now I can look back from this height, and I can see the goodness of God in every single part, and I can hardly wait to see what’s ahead.**

That's the perspective we need to give to younger women, wherever you are on that mountain. But let me just assure you, the higher you go, if you're walking with Jesus, the clearer the view gets. It really, really does, and it's so exciting.

Last night we had dinner with our granddaughter who turned 19 yesterday. She's a student here in Chattanooga, so we were able to take her out for her birthday. Her roommate came along, and I was telling those two girls that. I thought, "They're sitting here thinking, 'What are you talking about?'" But they listened so sweetly, and somehow I hope it will be in there. But that's what we need to tell these younger women.

Older and younger—there's not a specific age that's given, and the reality is every one of us is both. I have women in my life who are in their 90s. I have my mother who is 92 and other women who are older than me. Some who are actually younger than I am chronologically, but they have more spiritual maturity than I do. We're to look to those women, and we're to learn from them even as we make ourselves available to other women.

This is life-on-life discipleship. It is very relational. Not just relational. It is also substantive, as we're going to see, but it is relational.

Whether you are involved in Titus 2 ministry, just in an informal one-on-one sort of a way, or I'm going to give you one model for a more programmed kind of way for your church; the point is, this should be our lifestyle. It should be the culture of our church. It should not be the exception. It was just part of the life of this church. That's the way Paul was laying it out for them. It was just to be a very natural thing.

If we were really being obedient to this call, we would not need to think in terms of programming. But the problem is the concept has been lost for so many years that it sounds foreign. We've been told that independence is power, not that we're to be involved, interdependent with one another. So many times we do have to re-teach this concept and teach women how to do it.

Verses 3-5 are really a mandate to teach biblical womanhood to other women. It doesn't mean that's the only thing we're to teach, but it does mean that some of our teaching should and must include biblical womanhood, a biblical perspective of womanhood. **We cannot assume that the women sitting in our churches understand womanhood.**

If you'll look at the second page of your handout, we're going to do a very, very quick overview, tack this on to everything Mary said this morning in the session. Before I go on, let me explain why I think it is so important that we include this in our discipleship of other women.

A few years ago a friend of mine moved to a new city. We knew of a church in that city, a very sound church, and they immediately got involved in it. After several months she emailed me, and she said, "I'm so confused. The teaching, the preaching is so sound. There's a strong women's ministry with strong Bible studies, but as I'm getting to know the women, as I'm interacting with them in Bible studies, much to my shock, I'm discovering that they think like feminists. How

could there be such a disconnect from their theology to their application of that into their womanhood?"

I emailed her back and said, "Where in your church are women being intentionally taught the principles of biblical womanhood as a contrast of what they're hearing 24/7 from the world?"

After several weeks she emailed back and she said, "I looked and I listened, and there is no place. The Bible studies are strong, but they do not make the application or talk about those specific principles of biblical womanhood."

That really gave me reason to pause, and I realized I'm afraid that's all too common.

I want us to briefly go over basic principles of womanhood. This was expanded in the session yesterday, the pre-conference session, and in Mary's session.

In Genesis 1 we read that in the beginning God said, "Let there be light, and there was light" (verse 3). **Our first principle is that God's Word is our authority.**

In Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our image and in our likeness." Here we have the principle of our purpose. **Being made in the image of God means that we were made to live in relationship with Him and reflect His glory. That is our purpose.**

Our authority is God's Word; our purpose is His glory.

"God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him, male and female He created them" (1:27). We heard a wonderful exposition of that this morning.

Now I want us to skip to Genesis 2:18 when the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." It is important to understand this word *helper*. The Hebrew word refers most often to God as our helper.

I've listed verses there for you where we see God ministering to us as our helper, and the descriptions that are there help us to understand what it means to be a helper. The helper "defends, sees and cares for the suffering, supports, protects, delivers from distress, rescues, and comforts."

Do you see that this is the softness that Mary talked about? This is our responsiveness to people and to situations. We can summarize those words as community and compassion. **Our female design equips us to nurture relationships and to be channels of very practical compassion.** The problem is the fall.

The woman became her own authority, and she sought her own glory, her own happiness. The man and the woman sinned, and in doing so, they lost their ability to glorify God. They lost their ability to reflect their creation design.

This helper explanation is a description of the true woman. When Eve sinned, she became the new woman. The solution is the gospel. As Adam and Eve stood there wondering if God would end human history, God spoke to the serpent and said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman” (Genesis 3:15). Stop. There is sovereign grace. “I will do for them what they cannot do for themselves.” Think, hope must have been what entered Adam and Eve’s minds. Hope—“He will do for us. He will undo what we have done.”

“And between your offspring and hers” (3:15). She’s going to have a baby. Somehow this solution to their problem is going to come through her body. “He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel” (3:15). This one who will come will be victorious.

This is the first proclamation of the gospel, and what was the response to the gospel? Adam named his wife. You remember, we heard that naming goes with headship. It is a responsibility of headship. What did he name her? Eve. This shows his belief in the gospel, because Eve means life-giver. This more than biological. It is that, but it is so much bigger, so much bolder, so much more profound. **We are to be life-givers in every relationship and in every situation.**

Even if we are redeemed, we are still tempted to be new women, to be life-takers. It is a constant temptation that we face. Our own sin and culture will influence us, tempt us to look out for number one rather than to say, “I am my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper. My purpose is God’s glory, and my authority is God’s Word.” We need to be discipled to be true women.

We need to learn how. As you look at that chart, how do we become defenders? How do we see and care for the oppressed? How do we support? How do we push the gospel out in this way in every situation, in every season of life, in every relationship? It all goes back to our authority being God’s Word, our purpose being His glory. We need to be discipled to be true women, to be life-givers.

As we begin thinking about how we disciple women in this way, we need to start now connecting these two things: Titus 2 calling and our calling to biblical womanhood. How do we push that out in ministries in the local church?

I’ve seen many churches live Titus 2:3-5 out and say, “What we’ll do is match older women and younger women.” So it’s basically chronological, and then sometimes they’ll come up with these ways that they’re going to match them—similar hobbies or different things like that. I’ve observed those ministries, and it seems to me that most often they’re very short lived. They fizzle very quickly. Some relationships work, some don’t.

Some of the **questions we need to think** about when we think about the how of Titus 2 as a part of our church ministry are listed here on your handout.

- What is the purpose of this ministry? We need to be sure we’re thinking biblically on that. It should be relational, but it should be much more than that. One of the purposes should be that we might teach principles of biblical womanhood to other women.
- Secondly, what is the content of this ministry?
- Third, how are mentors selected and trained?

- And fourth, to whom are they accountable?

It was after the experience of my friend moving to a new city and realizing that the women in her church were functional feminists that we really began to give this very serious thought. In our own church, we developed a small group discipleship model. I'm going to explain that to you, not that it is the only way to go about doing this, but I hope that it can be something that you can at least take it and adapt it in your situation.

Before I explain it, because I will forget this as we move on, down at the bottom of your handout are a couple of places you can go for resources. I'm going to give you just a few of the highlights of this document on how to implement this model that I'm going to share with you. It's not up on the website yet, but if you write to this email address that's here, they will send it to you.

[cbennett@pcanet.org] It will be up on the website soon.

Then, secondly, there is a [discipleship curriculum for teen girls](#). [True Woman Curriculum] That's on the front of the brochure you received. I also have a brochure just on this. If you're particularly interested in the teen girls, come up and get a fuller brochure on that and come by our booth over in the exhibit hall.

Now, what is the model? As we examine this concept and thought about how we wanted to implement this in our church, we realized that often one-on-one relationships sometimes just don't go the distance. We began thinking, "Jesus discipled a group. Maybe we need to think in terms of small group discipleship."

So the **distinguishing characteristic of this model are**, first of all, it is one part of the whole. Meaning by that, this became one part of our women's ministry. We have several existing Bible studies that meet weekly, strong Bible studies, but this is one part of that. It does not take the place; it does not compete with. **It just comes alongside as one part of the total ministry of women.**

The second distinguishing characteristic is that **it is small groups** rather than one on one. These are small groups of six to eight, each with a leader, a Titus 2 leader. **The leader is not so much a teacher as she is a facilitator. It is very relational, very informal.**

The third principle is a **definite time frame**. We designed this ministry to last three years. Some churches, many churches all over the country are using it, some make it a four-year ministry. But the idea was and is that women will be in this ministry for a definite length of time, let's say three years, and at the end of that time we challenge them to now consider various options: To take what they have learned and to move out very intentionally in ministry.

That might mean that they have specific callings within their families, but they go about those callings more intentionally. Many of them become Titus 2 small group leaders. Some maybe go on to youth ministry or maybe children's ministry, various things.

Another option we give them is: If you have finished these three years, and you still do not feel equipped to move out into ministry, and you want to sign up and go through it again, that's great. We have women who do that. They'll be in a different group, and what happens is they really do become co-leaders in those groups. They know more than they thought they did, but their confidence grows.

Just recently a young woman called me, and she said, "I need to tell you what has happened in my life since being in a Titus 2 discipleship group."

I thought back on this young woman, and I remembered that she was one of the most fragile young women I'd ever seen. She has now completed three years in her group.

She said—I could hear it in her voice, there was such confidence. She said, "I'm so excited about the Lord. My marriage is so much stronger and sweeter. I'm working in a crisis pregnancy counseling center. I'm leading a group of women, discipling them at this center. It's wonderful. I'm just so thankful for what I was taught, the way I was discipled by the leaders in my group."

We see those sorts of results all the time.

Then the fourth principle is **there's a very limited purpose to this ministry**. That's part of the reason that we make it just three or four years. **The purpose is to teach biblical womanhood to women**, to teach women to be true women, to teach them the principles and to give them a small accountability group, that they begin praying for one another and thinking about, "How do we work this out as we're living live together, as we're facing our various situations in life?"

In order to accomplish that purpose, there is **a specific curriculum**, and that's the fifth principle: **A specific curriculum**. You may select something else. What we use, on the back of this brochure, you see Discipleship Materials, track 1 and track 2. Track 1 is the books on biblical womanhood that we call biblical foundations for womanhood. What we have done, what the other churches we have worked with have done is to select three of those books. Usually we start with *Spiritual Mothering* and then use either *By Design* or *The True Woman*, and we end up with *The Legacy of Biblical Womanhood*.

One of the reasons we made this into a three-year ministry is because several years ago I began to notice an odd kind of pattern that was developing. Women would come to me, and they would say, "Oh, my favorite book that you've written is . . ." and I could find no rhyme or reason to what they were saying. Then it occurred to me to ask, "What are the other books that you have read?"

I would ask that. It made no difference which books they had read. It made no difference which was the third book. The point was, their favorite one was the third book they had read.

Here's the point: **We are talking about such a major paradigm shift from the world's way of womanhood that we have heard all our lives to biblical womanhood that it takes three years to make that shift**, for it to really get into our hearts, into our minds, and to begin to affect the way we think and live, for this rich terminology of being a life-giver to work itself out in

every way of our lives, for us to begin thinking, “How do I glorify God in this relationship?” rather than, “How do I get what I want out of this relationship?”

One more story: A couple of years ago during a very short span of time, four women in our church came to me with various situations. One—a health crisis. One—a rebellious child. One—a difficulty in marriage. One—a health issue. They all came saying, “Help me.”

Three of them came saying, “Help me know how to glorify God in this situation. Help me know how to submit this to the authority of God’s Word.” We could just jump into the hard things very quickly.

Interestingly, the fourth woman who came, no matter what direction I tried to go in our conversations, she would say, “But I have to think about what’s best for me.”

I could not figure this out. These four women were all in the same church, all sitting under the same preaching of the word, week by week, how could there be such a difference? As I began thinking about it, the first three women, I realized, were in Titus 2 groups and had very strong relationships with godly women.

As I began to teach about this fourth woman, it occurred to me that to my knowledge, there was no relationship with a godly woman who was helping her. She was listening to friends who were telling her, “You don’t have to put up with this.”

This really does make a profound difference in the lives of women, but also in the lives of our churches. It really does.

Now, a couple more words of explanation about this model. The way **we run the program is year to year**. You can start it in September, or you maybe want to start it in January. It does not matter when you start it, but women sign up to be in groups. There’s lots of publicity that goes out before, and this document even has examples of newsletter articles that can be sent out. One of the things that we say in all of our publicity about it is: “This is not a personality-driven ministry. You will not sign up to be in a certain woman’s group. In fact, you will not know who your leader is because we are sisters in Christ. We hope that every group will have much variety, that all of the people in the group will not be the same age or the same situations. We’re hoping to have rich diversity in the groups. You will sign up for the time that is best for you, and then your leader will contact you.”

When we meet with and train our leaders, they decide when they want their group to meet. **Groups meet once a month**, as opposed to weekly, because women are busy, church life is busy, and the purpose is not to undermine everything else in church. We found once a month makes it work. Each of the leaders decides when she wants her group to meet. There’s some in the morning, some at night, one on Saturday, and then we post those times, and women can sign up. Then their leader contacts them.

Our first gathering is all together. Again, all the information for that is right here. At that first gathering, we lay out the purpose, the characteristics, all that is involved in this, and we give

them their books at that time. **We ask them to read the first chapter, and at their first group meeting, they will discuss that chapter. They'll share what they got out of it. They'll talk about it. They'll interact over it together. They hear prayer requests. They pray for one another.**

And we tell our leaders in advance that it will probably take anywhere from three to six months for the group to really begin gelling, unless the women already know each other very well beforehand. Sure enough, you can almost see it when the groups start to feel like a group, when it becomes very natural, and they really start sharing their lives with one another.

Okay, that's the model. Now, let me just briefly give you a little bit about the teen curriculum so that if you're discipling teens, because our calling is also to teach biblical womanhood to our teens. We need to not wait until women are married and in crisis to start in these groups. If we start way back here, it will be much better.

The [teen curriculum](#): There's a leader's guide, and there's a journal for the girls. This is a three-year curriculum. It can be used in any different forums that you might want. The leader's guide develops lessons for the leader, and the girls use their journal. There are also many ideas for getting the girls involved in ministries and getting them involved in relationships with other women of the church. There's ideas for crafts—just many, many different resources there.

Now, let's see if you have any questions, and we may have a little bit of difficulty hearing, but if you'll stand and speak very loudly, I think we can do this. I think we're small enough that we can do it. Let's see if there are any questions.

Very good question: **What happens if someone moves into your church during that three-year period.** First of all, you're starting a new group 1 every year. It's very interesting to see how this works. The first year, in our experience—you might find it different in yours—but in our experience, our first year, we pretty much got the core of women, women who are faithful in everything else in church, and so they signed up and became involved. It really became the buzz of the church.

They were talking about it all the time, and one good thing is, since all of the Titus groups are studying the same thing, there's a sense of unity among the groups. But as they talked about it, women that we thought were very much plugged in would start saying, "The reality is, I did not really have a friend in this church, and I am establishing such deep relationships."

Other women started hearing. **The second year these women went on to year two. We started up new year-one groups.** One of the things we did is at every opportunity, women who had been through a year, would give testimonies as to what it meant. That year we reached way out to the periphery of church life. It was quite wonderful as we began to pull in, but we ran into something that we did not anticipate.

Some of those women may come to their group and they may not, and the leaders began saying to us, "There's no consistency in their attending. We had assumed that they would be committed

to this when they signed to be in a group of six people, and it's once a month. Our first-year group had been."

We stepped back from it, and we said, "We've reached women who are not consistent in their church attendance. They don't understand commitment. This is going to be part of our discipleship. So we really had to encourage our leaders: "You keep calling them every month and reminding them. Ask them, 'If you can't come, that's fine, but is there any way that I can pray for you?' You keep reaching out to them." Slowly we have seen many of them begin, not only become committed to their groups, but to church life.

Then you'll have your year three even as you start another one-year group. The other wonderful thing is, by the time you've done two years, your training of your leaders becomes minimal because you start drawing from women who have been in the groups to be the leaders, so they understand how it works.

Okay, good question: **When they initially sign up, do they understand the three-year commitment?** What we tell them is: "You sign up one year at a time. It is a three-year program. We hope you will go through all three years, but we only ask you to sign up one year at a time. We understand that your lives may change."

It was amazing the percentage—I don't know what it is—but the percentage that goes through all years because they get so attached to their group, they don't want to miss. But another thing that will happen is you may have a woman in a year-one group. She gets to year two, and maybe she's had to take a job outside the home, or something in her life has changed, and she needs to go at a different time. We can plug her into another group that is convenient for her, and she slips right into that because they've been studying the same thing. So it works well that way.

Okay. Good question: **What do we use to train the initial leaders?** I thought you may ask that. We are in the process of developing that training material. We have it in a very abbreviated form, but it should be available by this summer. When you email for this [cbennett@pcanet.org], you will be given information about contacting us by summer to get that [book is now [available](#)]. It will take you until at least summer to do part one—to get your leaders and all. Really, it will take longer than that. Primarily, we teach them principles of biblical womanhood. We have them do some reading. We meet with them as if they were a Titus group, and we interact over the material. We begin to get the feel of it.

One thing we learned is, if women had been Bible teachers, they have a bit of a stretch to do this, because their tendency is to want to develop a lesson plan. That's not what we do with this. We go in ready for it to go wherever it needs to go with that small group, and **we encourage the groups to meet in homes** if that's possible.

So we work with leaders as a Titus group. We have some different guidelines that we give to them. We have them sign a spiritual mothering covenant saying they understand that they are accountable to the leadership of the church and all of those various things. We will have that available for you very soon.

You're asking all the right questions: **How do you handle older women who need to mature in the Lord?** One of the things we find is that a lot of older women—and I don't even know who to say the older ones are—but let's just say women 60 and older, but maybe even my age, 70 and older—many of them really do not feel that they can take on the responsibility of a group. They just feel that at their life season, maybe health issues, whatever. What we understand is that they do have a lot of life experiences.

My husband and I recently retired. We're in a new church now. We went to a church plant in order to help them out, so we're starting this ministry in a different church now. One of the things we're doing is we're asking some young women who are really gifted and who understand biblical womanhood to be the leaders of the group, but we're going to some of our older women and saying; "Will you come along and be the wisdom in the group?" We're partnering a woman in her 40s or 50s who really is capable of doing this, but how much sweeter and stronger the group will be with this 70- or 80-year-old who would not feel that she could lead the group, but her presence, her comments will bring much richness to it.

So look at the profile of your church. See what you have to work with. Some churches say, "But we don't have anybody over 40." Then that's what you've got. You pick out the most mature of those women, and they lead the groups. Let's not whine about what we don't have. Let's get geared up to make sure that ten years from now we don't have women saying, "But we don't have older women who will do this."

Good question: **Will the young women be interested?** My experience, it's limited, but my experience is, if you peel back very few layers, young women are longing for older women who will love them. They're longing for mothers because many of them have not been mothered.

All of us as women, we may have suppressed it, but God has designed us with a nurturing instinct. So many women long to nurture someone else. One of the things I have found is, as we begin going and recruiting leaders, our first line of women that we went to were not our strong Bible teachers. They were teaching Bible studies. We began going to women that we had seen something very special in them—a nurturing desire in them.

I cannot tell you how many of them would begin weeping and saying, "I long to do this, but I'm just not qualified." I'd say, "Yes! You're our women! That means you will rely on Jesus and not on yourself. God has put that desire in your heart."

So much of it is going and nurturing them into it and helping them see that they really are—many of them will be women who will say, "But you don't know the failures in my life." But God's the redeemer of those failures! Those failures are part of His story in you. That is okay.

The very process of recruiting and going after these women is part of the discipleship. Does that answer?

As it's covered over in prayer, it amazes me how they just start this.

Good question: **How do you get new leaders?** Even after our first year, we go to our group leaders and say, “Is there anyone in your group that you think is ready to be a leader?” Many times there are. Most of our leaders were, in fact. We didn’t think to encourage this, the women did it themselves. But now we encourage it because it was such a good idea. If a woman who has finished year one does become a leader, they chose to remain in their group and to finish their cycle. So they were in a group and leading a group. Does that make sense?

That was really good. They said, “I don’t want to give up my group, but I will lead another group.” So that worked great. Then see, her group, her existing group, prayed for her and prayed for her group. Wonderful things go on.

What about one-on-one relationships? We should encourage this, whether it is an ongoing kind of relationship, whether it’s a conversation at church, that should just be the way we live. Yes, there may be one-on-one relationships. One of the things we encourage here is always acknowledge and celebrate those that are already doing this, those that are doing it in one-on-one fashion. That’s wonderful. That is absolutely wonderful.

Do the teens get through the whole program? Well, depending on how old they are when you start it, most of them are finishing up high school when they finish up the material, so they may be going. But what happens is they go really armed with what they need to know about womanhood as they move out into the world. If they are still in the church, then I would say put them into one of your Titus groups.

Try to have a lot of interaction between your adult Titus groups and your teenage girls. You’ve got to adapt this to your church. This is not a structure. These are principles and some ideas. One church I know of launched the whole thing by teaching a one-quarter Sunday school class. They taught the year-one of the teen curriculum to women and girls. It was going to be girls and their mothers, then other women wanted to be in it, so they were included. Then all of the teens and all of the women were so high on it that they then began the whole teen ministry and the Titus ministry with the girls.

You want to mainstream your teen girls into your women’s ministry as much as you can anyway. So at your women’s events, you would have your teen girls giving testimonies about their groups. You would be overlapping the groups whenever you could. So they just stream right into church life.

To wrap up, I want to call your attention back to the wonderful story of when the angel came to the young woman Mary and gave her this astounding announcement that she would be the mother of the Messiah. That incredible story is a high point of human history. After the angel has said to her, “You will be with child. You will give Him the name Jesus,” then the angel says, “Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month for nothing is impossible with God” (see Luke 1:35-38).

Do you ever read that and think, “Wait a minute. What does that have to do with this announcement of the birth of the Messiah?” It had everything to do with that because, you see, this was Titus 2 before Titus 2 was written.

God knew our need, including Mary's need, of other women to encourage and to equip us to live for His glory. So the angel dropped that bit of information into her heart, and we read that "Mary hurried to the hill country to Elizabeth's home" (see verse 39). What a beautiful example: a young woman going to an older woman who would encourage and equip her to live for God's glory.

We read that "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she said in a loud voice, 'Blessed are you among women. Blessed is the child you will bear. Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord should come to me?'" (1:42-43).

She was filled with the Holy Spirit. He is our resource. God's Spirit and His Word are our resource for this high and holy calling. Elizabeth affirmed Mary. She encouraged Mary. She instructed Mary. And what was the result? Mary said, "My soul glorifies the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (1:46). This young woman exploded in a song of praise to the Savior.

My point is that **when we do Elizabeth work in the lives of the young women in our churches, I believe that we will see them explode in lives of praise that will be a blessing for generations to come.**

One commentator said, "Mary did not sing when an angel spoke to her. It was when another woman came alongside her and encouraged her."

Are the women in your church singing? I hope so. Let's pray.

Father in Heaven, how we thank You for the high and holy calling that You have given us. We thank You that You have given us Your very life, Your very Son, and because of that we can be life-givers in our homes, in our churches, and in all of life.

Father, how I pray that we will be like Elizabeth, that we will be filled with Your Holy Spirit, and that we will point women to our Savior.

I do pray for every woman in this room, Father, and I give You thanks for her in the name of Jesus. Amen. Thank you for being here.

All Scripture has been taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

Leslie: The message you just heard was presented at *Revive Our Hearts* 'True Woman '10 conference in Chattanooga. You can hear any of the messages delivered there and more by visiting www.truewoman.com. There you'll find even more ways to connect from books and resources for yourself, your friends, or your life group to on-demand multi-media to ongoing conversations you can be a part of.

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