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How to Care for the Women in Your Church

Use these assessment forms to help you and your church leaders discern whether you are truly helping the women in your church.



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Introduction

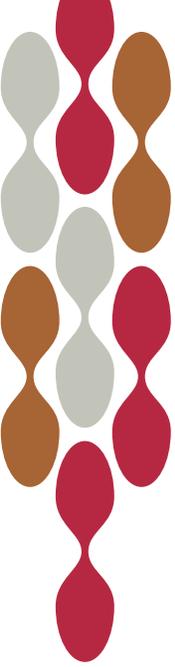
Keeping Up with the Kaleidoscope of Women's Needs



By JoHannah Reardon

Women's roles and places in society have changed dramatically in the last 30 years. Such changes are bound to have an enormous impact on the church. And if we are going to continue to impact and aid women in their walks with Christ, we need to slow down long enough to evaluate what we are doing, and to consider if those approaches and methods are effective.

That is the purpose of this assessment pack. We hope to give you a place to start in thinking through the many changes taking place in the way women think about themselves. This pack is far from exhaustive, but it gives you a beginning point.



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Keeping Up with the Kaleidoscope of Women's Needs

We've included questions we think women today particularly struggle with, like these: Can God still use me in spite of my past and insecurity? Should we change the way we talk about sex with girls and women? Can a mentoring ministry work in our church? Is my church giving women enough of an opportunity to serve? What about practical help on the home front? How can God help women with the enormous loneliness they feel?

We hope this practical tool will assist you and your church as you devote yourself to helping women.

Blessings,

JoHannah Reardon

Contributing Editor for GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM

Leader's Guide

How to use this download for a group study



This download is a collection of tools to use for yourself or with those you lead to measure how you're doing in your women's ministry.

Here's how to use these assessments with a group:

- 1. Print and photocopy the assessment tool you'd like to use (you have permission to photocopy for your church or educational use).**
- 2. Hand it to those you lead to complete.**
- 3. Lead a discussion based on their answers.**

Odd Woman In

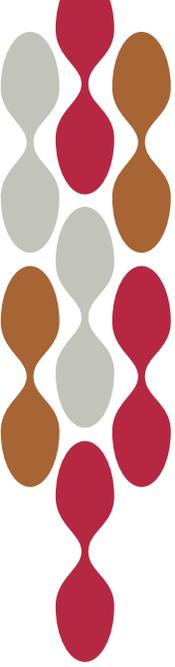
God has a plan for everyone, even broken and hurting people.

By Peri Gilbert



Most of the last two decades of my life have been spent as the "odd woman out": out of love, out of hope, and out of control. As the "odd" one, I found myself either ignored by others or noticed, but regardless, I found pain waiting for me. Thankfully, I did not remain "out." God's mercy, hope, and love found me, leading me to become the "odd woman in."

Webster's Dictionary defines odd as "different from what is usual or expected." As a nine-year-old little girl, I certainly was odd and so was my life. Having lost my father, and my mother being emotionally unavailable, my nine-year-old heart and mind were left to figure out life and love on their own. While friends played with Barbie dolls or spent an



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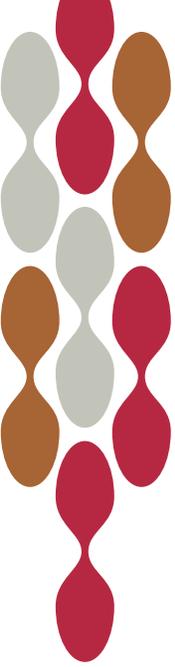
Odd Woman In

afternoon playing dress-up, I spent the day creating ways to have people notice and love me—even my friends' parents. This pursuit continued throughout my life. In fact, this pursuit became a way of life for me.

Because of who God is, he did not allow me to remain the odd woman out. Today I serve in full-time ministry. The brokenness and hurt I endured have allowed me to provide comfort to others as well as do what Paul described: "We stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead" (**2 Corinthians 1:6-9**). God has proven to me that if he has the power to give life to the dead, he has the power to revive my life, and he has the power to revive anyone's.

Discuss whether the following is true of your church, and if not, how to make it so.

1. No matter a woman's past or current brokenness, hurt, or pain, God has a plan for her. Do the women of your church believe that? In not, what can we begin to do to help women believe that is true?
2. "Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir" (**Galatians 4:7**). Does our church affirm this truth for women who may feel like the odd woman out?
3. God has called us into the body of Christ, and he desires to use us (**1 Corinthians 12:27**). How can we help women see that they are useful to the body of Christ?



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Odd Woman In

4. Your brokenness doesn't make you weaker; it makes you stronger. It makes you a vessel God can use for his glory (**2 Corinthians 12:9**). How can we help women to understand that their brokenness can be an asset rather than a liability?

5. "We stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead" (**2 Corinthians 1:6-9**). How can we model that we all must rely on God, not ourselves, as we minister to others?

6. As women pursue God's will for their lives and walk a journey of healing, they may encounter doubt, confusion, and guilt. What can we as a church do to help them work through those conflicting emotions?

7. **Romans 8:38-39** and **Psalms 138:8**) declare that nothing you can do, or have done, can separate you from God's love and the plan he has for you. Is our church good at helping women recognize this? If not, what can we begin to do to change that?

—This assessment was adapted from an article of the same name that first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

Let's Talk About Sex

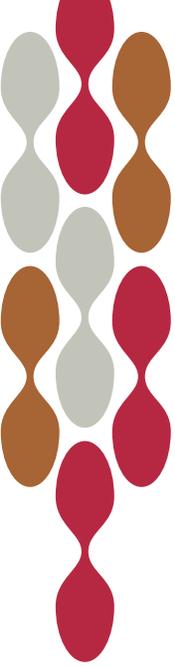
Acknowledge the complexities of women's sexuality.

By *Laura Turner*



I grew up hearing a lot about sex in the church.

Raised during the height of the purity movement, I had friends who "kissed dating goodbye" and others who plunged headfirst into the dating pool. We were instructed to wait until marriage for sex, but given little guidance about what to do with our sexual desires in the intervening years. We young women were reminded to dress modestly to avoid causing men to stumble, which made little sense to a flat-chested 15-year-old. Boys were instructed to guard their hearts and eyes as well, lest they fall prey to the wildfire lust lurking in their loins.



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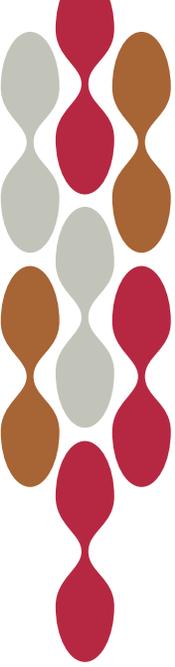
Let's Talk About Sex

Though we heard plenty about our libidinous male counterparts, after college something strange happened. We heard nothing at all. Married women, it was assumed, had figured everything out. Single women were asexual beings, contentedly waiting for the right man to come along.

The messages we heard gave me the distinct impression that men were little more than walking lust machines, perpetually teetering on the brink of arousal. Just the slightest hint of cleavage or an overexposed leg could be enough to drive them over the edge. You can imagine my shock the first time my husband wasn't interested in sex. The idea that he might also be tired some nights, or turned off after an argument, or simply not in the mood, had never occurred to me.

Mark whether the following is true of your church:

1. Do we ignore female sexuality in our church? Is the subject addressed only from a masculine perspective? Yes No
2. Does a heavy emphasis on modesty lead women to think of their bodies as dirty, dangerous things? Yes No
3. Does our church indirectly teach that a woman is ultimately and most importantly a sexual snare? Yes No
4. By not acknowledging the existence or the goodness of sexual desires in women, are we quietly condemning a central aspect of what it means for people to be human? Yes No



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Let's Talk About Sex

5. Do we teach women that the body is a really good thing or that it is nothing more than a receptacle for male sexual desire?

Yes No

6. When it comes to sex and understanding how the female body works, which is complicated and requires direct and sometimes embarrassing conversation, do we muster the courage to talk frankly about our bodies? Yes No

7. If we hope to have great conversations about sex, we must give each other permission to have conversations about sex poorly. Is our church willing to open this subject, even if we don't have all the answers? Yes No

8. Do we provide a well-modeled sexual ethic from our church leaders, whether they are married, single, divorced, or widowed? Yes No

9. Does our church talk about the goodness of marriage and sex, and the challenges of both? Yes No

—This assessment was adapted from an article of the same name that first appeared on LEADERSHIPJOURNAL.COM.

Where Mentoring Goes Wrong

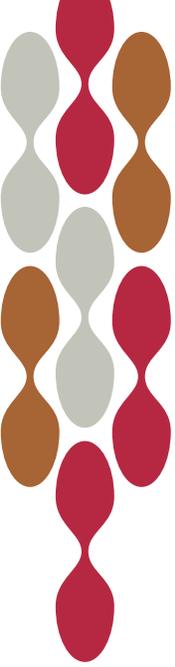
Why do good discipling relationships derail?



By Sue Edwards and Barbara Neumann

Most young people today hunger for mentoring. Leadership consultant Michael Hyatt remarks, "If there's one thing I have learned, it's that young men and women are desperate for mentors who will build into their lives." Never has a generation been more open to mentoring and never has the need for mentors been greater than it is now. One 25-year-old recently confessed, "I desperately want mentors. I stalk older women to mentor me. My friends and I are all dry sponges in need of encouragement, help, love, and listening ears."

Unfortunately, research reveals that up to 80 percent of young women abandon traditional mentoring programs in the first six months of participation.



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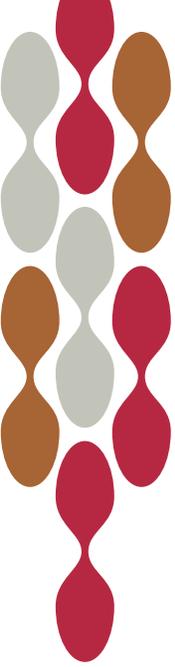
Where Mentoring Goes Wrong

While the younger generation wistfully longs for mentors, perplexed older women pray the next recruiting campaign will bring them in. What's happening here?

It is incumbent on mature women of God to break through the impasse and provide the vital mentoring relationships young women long for. We must find ways to retain one of the most valuable tools for spiritual growth. Both generations have much to contribute to the other, and when we walk through life together, both of us experience a fuller life.

Each statement below represents a dichotomy in the generations. Discuss how those differences can be overcome in your mentoring ministry:

1. Older women value programs, structure, and organization. Younger women value organic, flexible approaches.
2. Older women believe you must be a positive role model. Younger women believe you must be yourself.
3. Older women prefer to teach or impart wisdom. Younger women want to process life and learn from real experiences.
4. Older women prefer to learn through instruction. Younger women prefer to learn through stories, experiences, and lived-out truth.
5. Older women value privacy. Younger women value transparency.



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Where Mentoring Goes Wrong

6. Older women see distinct standards for how one should live as a woman. Younger women believe there is no one right way to be a woman.
7. Older women see one mentor for each mentee. Younger women prefer to learn from multiple mentors.
8. Older women prefer scheduled terms that start and stop. Younger women want an ongoing relationship and are content to build it over time.
9. Older women embrace contractual commitments. Younger women continue only if the experience is valuable.

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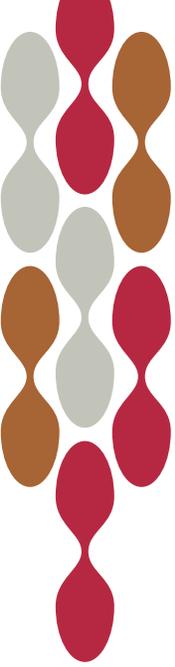
What Women Want: More Opportunities to Serve



Many churches are ignoring this valuable workforce.

By Halee Gray Scott

Many have attributed American churches' dwindling numbers to an "entitlement mentality," saying that today's Christians look to congregations to for a certain kind of fulfillment and leave when those needs aren't being met. But perhaps the trend is due to the very opposite—a servant mentality without a place to serve. Christian women in particular likely resonate with this idea, given the number of educated and gifted women admitting that they feel underutilized at church or that they have to leave their leadership gifts outside. Though women tend to outnumber men in the pews, the leadership of our churches



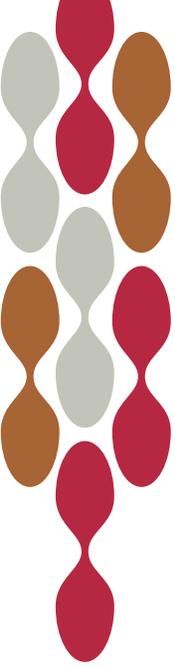
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What Women Want: More Opportunities to Serve

and ministries remains heavily male. As a researcher of Christian women and leadership, I've heard women say, "I feel invisible at church," "There's no room for me," or "I feel useless."

Mark whether the following is true of your church:

1. Are the women in our church underutilized because their gifts are not recognized or respected? Yes No
2. Do we have positions in our church that could be filled by women when we simply haven't considered them before? Yes No
3. Do we offer training and direction in spiritual gifts to women as we do to men? Yes No
4. We need better follow-up to link members' giftings with the work of the church. Yes No
5. It's clear to members how they can become involved in our ministries. Yes No
6. Our church recognizes that spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit regardless of race, social class, or gender. Yes No
7. Do the women in our church misconstrue the rejection they receive at our church, believing that God neither wants nor needs them? Yes No



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What Women Want: More Opportunities to Serve

8. Do the women in our church long to volunteer and participate, while the men are overworked and in need of help to sustain the ministry of the church? Yes No

9. Have the women in our church been taught that they are equipped to serve, or has no one ever drawn it out of them or stopped to notice? Yes No

10. Our church wants to see our ministries thrive, and therefore we make sure all members of the community are taking part in the work of ministry. Yes No

—This assessment was adapted from an article of the same name that first appeared on HER.MENEUTICS.COM.

Help for Messy Houses

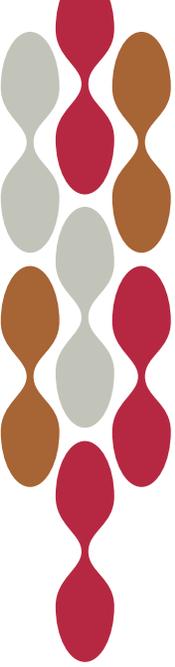


Some women need help getting the home front in order.

By Sandra Felton

Professional organizers have been doing it for years. Television programs have started doing it, too. Over the years, from time to time, friends have gathered to help one another out of difficult household-organizing situations. Yes, group home-organizing has a rich and varied history.

The problem of disorganization seems to be getting more pronounced. But what are the guidelines for helping those caught in the clutches of disorganization? Until now there have been few directives for what can be a sensitive situation: entering someone else's house to help make changes. Stepping up to meet this need is an opportunity to help women in the



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Help for Messy Houses

church. We can offer support for members and outreach to the community. Like many other ministries, home-organization is an opportunity to do as Paul admonished in Galatians 6:10, "Do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith."

Answer the following questions to see if this is a need in your church:

1. Why might women, especially, need help to keep their organizational boats from sinking in the choppy waters of modern life?
2. Does some woman in our church feel immobilized by a recent loss, suffer from chronic depression, find herself having just moved from a larger place, need an opportunity to learn housekeeping skills, or have a new baby?
3. Is there someone in our church who needs ongoing help, such as an elderly person or someone who is infirmed? How might we as a church offer that ongoing help?
4. Who in our church is naturally gifted at organizing and bringing order out of chaos wherever they find it (good at setting goals, maintaining focus, determining consecutive steps, spatial relationships, and decision making)? Might they be willing to help these people?
5. Before launching such a ministry, can we break the ice of this topic by offering educational classes on organizing skills and then training a volunteer team to actually offer hands-on assistance to those who need it?



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Help for Messy Houses

6. How can we make sure the person we are helping feels the group's respect even though she may be embarrassed about their reason for being there?
7. What do we need to consider: how to sort, where to store, how to discard, and many other details to make this job successful?
8. What do we need to do to make this a successful venture, such as announcing a meeting to share our vision and covering team dynamics? How will we launch this?
9. Some women may be overwhelmed because their house is too large, belongings have become prolific, or they are swamped with too many activities. If so, how might you help them address these needs?
10. Hoarding is a mental-health issue and should be handled by a professional counselor. Who can we refer someone to if this is beyond our ability to deal with it?

—This assessment was adapted from the article "When Women's Ministries Meet Messy Houses," which first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

The Church Should Be a Hospital

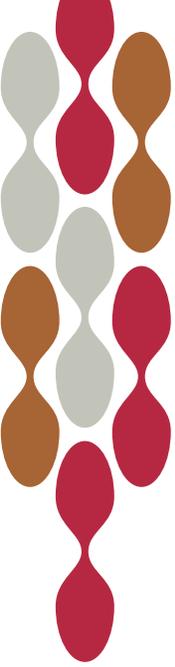


We are called to be a place of healing, not a place of hurt.

By Carmille L. Akande

I remember hearing when I was a little girl that church was a "hospital." It was a place for people who were sick and for those who needed healing. I believe this concept was adapted from Jesus' words recorded in the book of Luke: "Jesus answered them, 'Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent'" (Luke 5:31-32).

In this text Jesus was responding to questions concerning his affiliation with sinners. Jesus responded to the Pharisees by telling them that he came to save sinners and to lead them to repentance. Jesus compared sin to sickness, and he deemed himself the master physician. I believe the church should be a hospital, where Jesus is our master physician. It should be a place where those who are



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The Church Should Be a Hospital

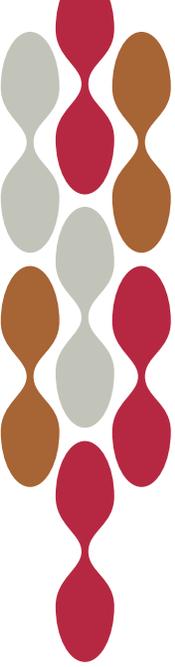
physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually wounded can come. It is a place where we should be able to check in and when we leave, we are healed or on the road to recovery.

The church should be a place where those who are lost can have a seat in the house of God. My concern is not that the doors of the hospital aren't open; instead, I question: Where are all the doctors, nurses, paramedics, and surgeons? Have they been replaced by those who are unlicensed to practice medicine, those who have no experience, those who lack the qualifications or credentials, and most important, those who have not been commissioned by the "board of medicine"?

I am not saying that every person involved in ministry must have a seminary or religious degree, but I am saying that they must have some qualifications, and the most important one is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Are we allowing those who are not saved to minister to the flock? Are we allowing those who are spiritually sick to treat others who are ill? Are we allowing con-artists to commit fraud and malpractice on the children of God, especially in women's ministry?

Mark whether the following is true of your church:

1. We hold the leaders of our church accountable for the lifestyles they live. Yes No
2. Our church is, in a sense, an innovative hospital with godly doctors, nurses, and paramedics. Yes No



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The Church Should Be a Hospital

3. We help women dream of ministry and help them achieve those dreams. Yes No
4. We instill worth in the girls of our church at an early age so they won't doubt it when they are older. Yes No
5. We encourage the women in our church by praying for them. Yes No

—This assessment was adapted from an article that first appeared on TODAYSCHRISTIANWOMAN.COM.

Banishing Spiritual Loneliness

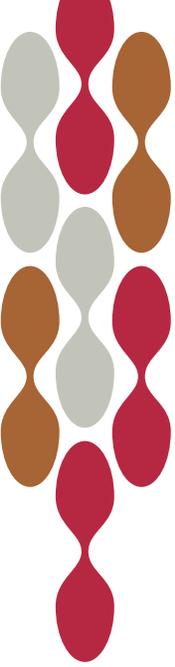
Three practices all women need.



By Keri Wyatt Kent

Women often walk a lonely road. When you are caring for others, questions often nag at the back of your mind: Who's mentoring me? Where do I take my questions and doubts? If I'm supposed to be a role model/leader/encourager, who does that for me? And there's nothing like doubt to make you feel alone.

Banishing spiritual loneliness begins with being honest about the fact that you feel lonely to begin with. Acknowledge your feelings, then move forward by engaging in spiritual practices that will help you and those you lead.

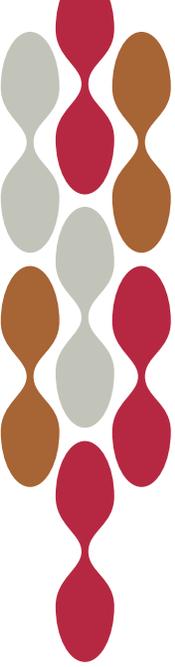


How to Care for the Women in Your Church

Banishing Spiritual Loneliness

Answer the following questions to see if this is a need of the women in your church:

1. Are the women in our church moving so fast through life that they don't really see the people around them? Or do they see them, but feel annoyed at them far too often? Do they have time to really connect? Ironically, busyness (even with an overabundance of connections) can be isolating.
2. Do the women in our church need to slow down? Perhaps the need is to do just one thing at a time. Allocate a chunk of time to one task, then move on to the next "chunk." Multi-tasking actually decreases efficiency.
3. Do the women in our church take time to look into the eyes of people they're meeting with, noticing their non-verbal communication? Or do they go from one task to the next without pausing and thinking?
4. Do the women in our church take time to slow down with God, even if they don't have a lot of time? Do they meditate on God's promises of love and acceptance? Perhaps we need to start with **1 John 3**. Focus on our identity in him, and recognize that we are deeply loved children of God.
5. It may seem counterintuitive, but the antidote for loneliness can sometimes be found in solitude—especially when we define solitude as not simply time alone, but time alone with God. Is that a priority of the women in our church?
6. Women are often task-oriented. While that's helpful, it can fuel an underlying belief that God's approval is related to our



How to Care for the Women in Your Church

Banishing Spiritual Loneliness

accomplishments, even contingent upon them. That's another way of saying we believe God's love is conditional. Is that a problem for the women in our church?

7. We need to take time to just be with God and know him (**Psalm 46**). How might we encourage that?

8. We also need others to minister to us, to encourage us. God designed us to live in community with others. Do we have a church environment that is conducive for this? If not, how can we begin to cultivate that?

9. Women need friends who will support them but also be willing to tell them the truth when it's not pretty. What can we do to provide such an atmosphere in our church?

—This assessment was adapted from an article of the same name that first appeared on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

Additional Resources

Articles, books, and Bible studies to help you further



Articles

The Strong Power in Every Woman—Reclaiming Eve's place in history means claiming our own.

By Suzanne Burden, available on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

Giving Grace Away—Hero or thief, I need the power of confession.

By Hannah Farver, available on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

Who Do You Think You Are?—Knowing and accepting yourself helps you be fully present without pretense.

By Janet Davis, available on GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

Books

Reclaiming Eve: The Identity and Calling of Women in the Kingdom of God, by S.M. Burden, C.D. Sunberg, J.A. Wright (Beacon Hill Press, 2014). As a woman, do you sometimes feel inferior, resigned to a self-image that seems second-best? Do you



Dealing with Exhaustion

Additional Resources

feel strong in your faith but wonder, how does God see me? Do you look around and realize you don't fit into a typical mold? Whether you feel discouraged and damaged or desire a greater understanding of your spiritual condition, this book will help you embrace your identity as one reclaimed by Jesus Christ. Learn not only how to live, but thrive as a child of God and a daughter of Eve.

The Friendships of Women, by Dee Brestin (David C. Cook, 2008). Intense, intimate, powerful, painful—join Brestin as she probes the depths of female friendship, including why it's hard to maintain that bond, and a look at three biblical role models.

Online Resources

Christ-Centered Women's Ministry—This download gives you a vision of how your women's ministry can change lives. Available from BUILDINGCHURCHLEADERS.COM.

What Should We Teach About Modesty?—Practical advice and perspective to teach a balanced view of modesty. Available from BUILDINGCHURCHLEADERS.COM.

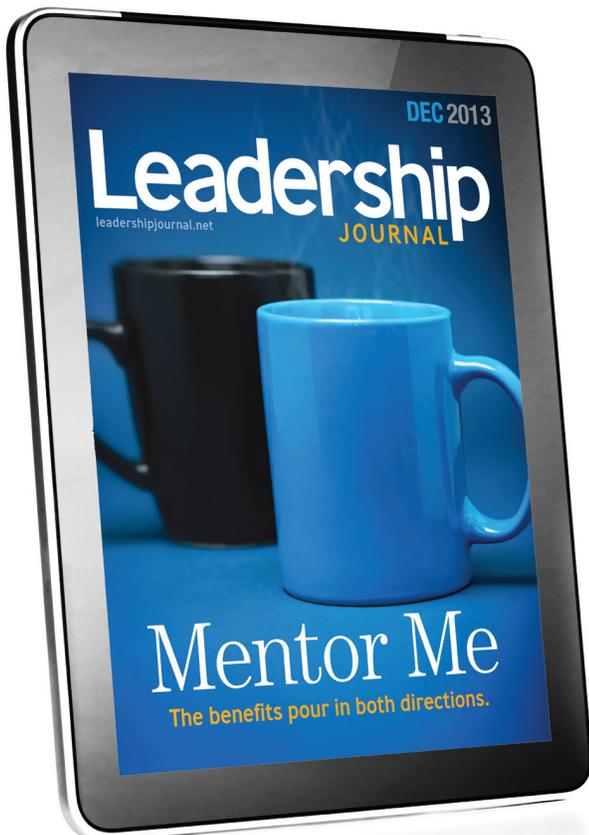
Ministry for Today's Women—What leaders of women's ministries need to know about the women they serve and the ministries they run. Available from BUILDINGCHURCHLEADERS.COM.

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