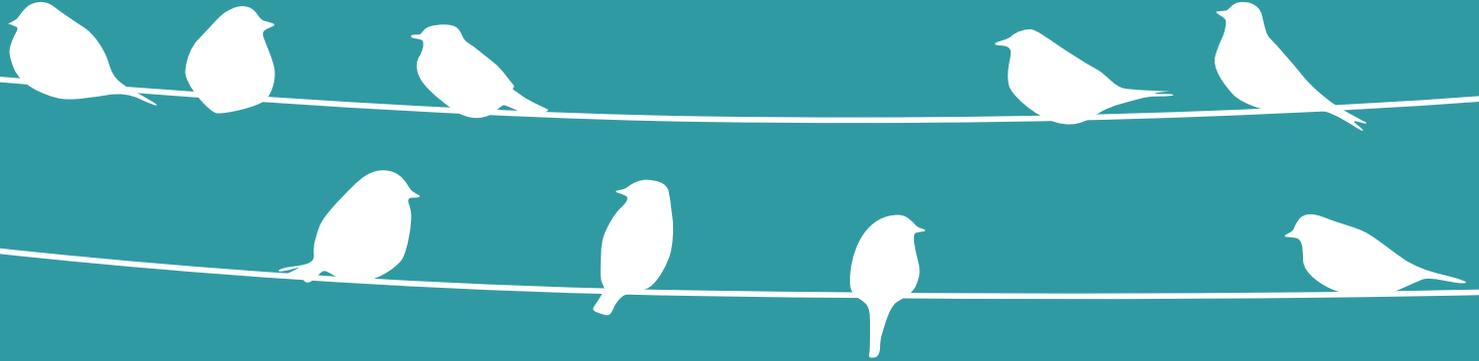


# Women need community

By Sharon Hoffman



When my daughters were young, it wasn't unusual to find me poolside at a dear friend's house during the summer months. One afternoon, Betty must have noticed the weariness on my face from her kitchen window. It wasn't long until she appeared at my side with napkins, lemonade, and cookies. Betty listened as I poured out my heart about the weight of motherhood, being pulled in too many directions, and an overload of ministry responsibilities.

As I reflect on that afternoon with Betty, and the numerous ones that followed throughout our six years of ministry in west Texas, I see how those precious times with a woman twice my age taught me much about my need for community. Betty knew what many today seem to have forgotten: we women have an inborn, heartfelt need for other women to come alongside us in every season of life.

Never before have we ever had such ready access to others through email, texts, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and other means. Yet, women tell me often, "I feel isolated and more alone than ever." The cultural pull on women to do it all and have it all seems to resonate with the bumper sticker that reads, "I am woman. I am invincible. I am tired."

Throughout the Scriptures, we see God place women in relationships to encourage one another and provide a place of retreat. Just as God sent Mary to Elizabeth and Ruth to Naomi, I believe He longs to place women together for support, friendship, accountability, and encouragement. That is exactly why we need women's ministry in our churches today. Women are the heartbeat of the home, community, and yes, the church. Many women can't define the longing they have, they just know something is missing when they are not closely bonded with other women in fellowship. They need Jesus, and we have the privilege of telling them of Jesus if we will commit to come alongside them by opening the doors of our church and our hearts. God designed the body of Christ to help us bear our burdens and to remain steadfast in our love of God. If we take a look at our church calendars, do we see events and service activities intentionally created to foster women's relationships? Shame on us, if not. We are missing a vital ministry to provide women with the transforming love of Jesus Christ and to provide a place for women to connect and cultivate Christian friendships.

If this is new territory for you, after much prayer, ask your pastoral staff or

women's director to help map out different options for your church to reach the women in your church and beyond. Determine what might draw women closer together in community. You may be surprised who is actually lonely in your church. There are women who appear to have it all together, to know the Scriptures, and to be able to laugh freely, yet they leave each service without connecting deeply with anyone. They are lonely and, quite frankly, unsure whether or not to return next Sunday. But, if a woman is invited to coffee or lunch or a play date with fellow young moms, she is more likely to return. She has someone who knows her and looks for her - a community of women she fits into, not where she feels she has to break into.

Time and time again I've watched women relax and begin to let walls down in painting classes, Bible studies, scrapbooking nights, baking cookies together, moms' groups, movie nights, fitness classes, and girls' nights out. One lady told me recently, "Until I learned every other mom of toddlers was struggling with potty training, I felt so inferior. Once the room was abuzz with sagas of other moms' potty-training defeats, I went home with hope and some new friends." I realized from her statement she felt heard and

encouraged by other women who had similar feelings and experiences. We could learn a lot from our ancestors who held quilting bees and canning sessions. They may not have had the label, but they were doing some serious women's ministry at those gatherings.

Those women knew the term "synergism." It means doing more together than one can do alone. Ten women working together as one force can accomplish exponentially more than ten women working on their own plans with their own agendas in mind. The purpose of a team is to help a group meld together as one force. Not everyone will be kindred spirits with each woman in your ministry, but hearts will begin to intertwine through similarities, interests, and talents. It is a joy to watch women beginning to know each other, growing, and loving on each other right before your eyes.

Lest you think I personally place priority on women's ministry just for others, I need to admit I participate in everything our church offers for women because I need support, encouragement, mentoring, and connectedness as well. My dearest friendships have come from the community our church provides. We plan numerous events throughout the year with the goal of refreshing the body, mind, and emotions of women. I have adopted Colossians 2:2-3 as my personal purpose statement and I believe it is the purpose for women's ministry as well: "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Look at the story of Moses, Aaron, and Hur in Exodus 17. When Moses was tired of holding up the staff as God had commanded him, Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on, then stood on each side of him and held up his hands. He was able to continue till sunset and not give up. God can provide friends to hold up your arms when you cannot, but only if you'll let them. I don't know what I'd do without my "arm-lifters" on some Monday mornings. Who grabs your arms and joins you in your

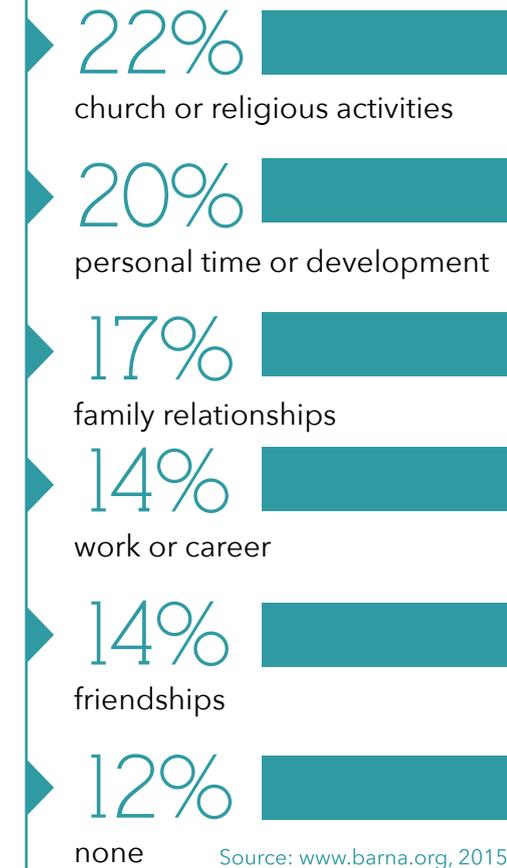
weariness, pain, struggles, and hurts? Reach out to women to comfort them and I can promise you they will be there grabbing hold of your exhausted hands when you need it.

Women also need hangout friends, chick-flick-watching, super-sale-shopping, cheesecake-sharing friends. We desperately long to find other women who have "been there" and who share not just our challenges, but who share the love of Jesus. And good old-fashioned fun! You know, like retreats overnight where you forget about home and responsibilities and just eat chocolate while talking late into the night. Something really special and beautiful can happen when God knits together the hearts of women around His heart.

After serving in church ministry 46 years, I believe a healthy women's ministry is vital to a church's overall health. This will look differently in each individual church, but speaking life into women will bring life into your church! In small and big ways, we as adult women have the potential to make each woman feel special because they are important to Jesus Christ. Realize this is a woman's desire – to know she is really known by you and, most importantly, by God. We're no longer wearing our cheerleading skirts or playing on the playground, but we have the same need as adult women as we did back then – we want to belong. You may ask, "Do the benefits of community outweigh the time and the risks?" They certainly do! I have never been sorry for loving a friend too much, but I have regretted not reaching out to a woman in need before. God created us for companionship, not isolation. Learn to love extravagantly, in your unique giftedness, even if it's not always easy. Go out of your way to comfort others "wherewith the comfort God has comforted you" (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Reach out and touch some sweet woman's heart today; you will receive far more than you give. I know this because I experienced such a gift again just last week. By the time we left the coffee shop, our cheeks were wet with tears and we had mascara running down our faces. True tissue time. I got to hear this sweet young

## Areas of life women would most like to improve

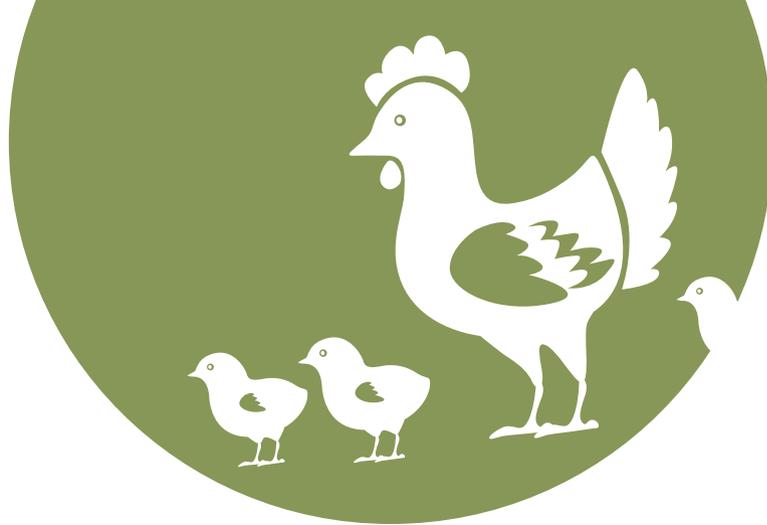


momma ask Jesus Christ to be her personal Savior in a coffee shop. Ah, women's ministry at its finest and oh, how important it is.

So, will we meet our ladies' heartfelt needs of belonging – belonging to Jesus and showing the way to do that through our love for them? Let's let them hear something different from us than the world's mantra of women's independence. It is vital we offer hope, encouragement, and companionship to walk through difficulty, hardship, and hurts. This sinful world inflicts enough pain on women – let's prayerfully determine to reach out to one another so we can all be healthier and happier women. I'm certain our marriages, families, and ministries will also be impacted. 

# Motherhood

By Carla Slayden



My husband and I have been blessed with four children, and are now enjoying being Grandma and Papa to 12 grandchildren. They range in age from 15 years to three months. As I reflect on my days of raising children, there are a few adjustments I would make.

## I would pray more and worry less.

Mothers of little ones, I know you are thinking, “Who has time to pray?” In the midst of feedings, diapers, toddlers, school, homework, sports ... time is a precious commodity. As one who has been there, I encourage you to make time. Your prayer closet may be a floor full of toys, a rocking chair, or the front seat of your car waiting for ball practice or piano lessons to be finished, but somewhere, sometime each day talk to your heavenly Father. Bring Him your fears, joys, burdens, and needs. Pray for those precious babies you are raising. Pray your husband and you will be godly parents. Pray your children will come to Jesus and love and live for Him! Bring your requests with thanksgiving and receive God’s peace that surpasses understanding.

**I would also play more and dust less.** Keep in mind, this is coming from a Type A, borderline OCD neat freak. I realize cleaning, laundry, and a million other things need to be done. As I look back, however, I regret many times I thought everything in its place trumped reading a story, building a pillow fort, creating a Lego masterpiece, or listening to a detailed description my children’s day in 3rd, 6th, or 12th grade. Enjoy these days ... they fly by. The day you drop them off at college will come all too soon. The house will stay clean, and quiet ... very, very quiet.

## I would seek more guidance from the Bible, not the advice of others.

I know we need good, Biblical counsel from wise people in our lives. It is a blessing. But in this age of Pinterest, Instagram, and a host of other resources, let’s not

forget God’s Word is the ultimate guide for raising children. I used to worry about trying to follow all the advice I was given. I now know that was just a ticket for a long guilt trip. And now we have social media to give us impossible standards to live up to! Personally, I hope my grandchildren know more about the baby in the manger than the elf on the shelf. Smile, nod, filter, and do what you have prayerfully decided is best for your children. A special shout out to those raising kiddos in ministry on this one. There is never a shortage of well-meaning church members to tell us what our children should be like!

## Lastly, I would take greater advantage of teachable moments.

Sometimes, in the craziness of life, we neglect those Deuteronomy 6 opportunities that draw our children’s hearts and minds to the ways of God, His greatness, His blessings, His answered prayers, and faithful promises. Be a mom who is in love with the Lord. We have not been given just physical bodies to raise, we have been entrusted with souls to guide. And, as hard as this is to imagine, God loves those babies even more than we do!

My prayer is with God’s help we raise children who have a deep relationship with Jesus Christ who walk with him through whatever life brings, and never stray from the protection and provision of their great shepherd. 

76%  
of women say they are  
satisfied with their lives...

{...but}

62%

of moms are dissatisfied with their balance between work and home life.

80%

of moms feel overwhelmed by stress.

70%

of moms say they do not get enough sleep.

56%

of moms feel overcommitted.

Source: [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org), 2015.

# Investing in younger women

By Mary Herman

Investing is the best way to prepare for the future. This is true financially as well as spiritually. My parents taught us to pay God, pay ourselves (savings), and adjust our choices so we could live on the remainder. Those lessons have proved to be invaluable as life has unfolded, and especially as the retirement years grow closer.

Those same principles apply beautifully as we invest in spiritual ways. Pay God – serve and spend time with Him. Pay yourself – rest in Him, learn of Him, find comfort in His presence. Live on the rest – live by the truths you gain. One such truth comes from 2 Timothy 2:2 (a guiding verse for my missionary service). Paul instructs Timothy to be strong in grace and a soldier of the cross by sharing the things he had learned with faithful men so they might pass that truth to others. Titus 2:3-5 makes it clear mature women are responsible for sharing the wisdom they have gained with younger women. What a privilege we have to share the things God has so carefully taught us with younger women who are struggling with busy lives and personal dilemmas.

Experience is a great instructor. Every individual comes with unique gifts and experiences that mold their perceptions regarding life and, to a good extent,

determines their reactions to struggles and victories. Women who have found God faithful through the struggles of life are most effective tools in God's hand as they invest in the lives of other women. .

Encouragement is another way to invest in the next generation. A person may struggle to see God's loving kindness and faithfulness in the midst of the storm. This is an opportunity to share how God has shown Himself faithful in times past and demonstrate trust in His future care. Paul left a wonderful model for us in the book of Philippians. He covered the issues, the credentials, the struggles, but he ended with admonitions to rejoice, pray about it, accept the peace God has for His children,

and choose to see the beauty, the wonders, and the positive by taking control of our thought life and, thus, our attitude toward life, people, and relationships (Philippians 4:4-9).

As ladies, we can impact the lives of the next generations who will, in turn, impact the lives of the generations to come. I challenge you to invest, encourage, and leave a legacy to be followed. Paul was able to say in Philippians 4:9, "Those things, which ye have learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." Let us pray together that, with Paul, we can say, "Follow me and all will be well with you." That is a great legacy! 

## { Investment tips }

### BE AVAILABLE

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to mentor another, but you should love the God of the Bible and want to abide by His Word. Being available with timely and godly advice can make the difference for the individual who is without an anchor. Younger women need the experience, endurance, and example of older women.

### BE A LISTENER

Don't feel compelled to dole out advice for every topic she might raise. Wait until she asks for your thoughts before offering them. Be trustworthy.

### BE REAL

We are all sinners saved by grace, continuing to be transformed into the image of Christ. And none of us is finished yet! So don't be afraid to be genuine, to reveal your weakness. In Christian mentoring, the grace of God gets the job done through us (and sometimes in spite of us).

Source:  
"How Christian Women Can Mentor and Be Mentored"  
by Kelley Mathews, [www.crosswalk.com](http://www.crosswalk.com)



# Balancing the physical and the spiritual

By Judy Henderson



I recently partnered with a nutrition doctor and fitness trainer to design a physical and spiritual health and fitness challenge. Our approach: a few minutes each day addressing key internal issues, easy real-food recipes, and exercises that could be done at home without equipment. We soon discovered those who succeeded in losing weight, keeping it off, and getting in shape were those who made a genuine change of heart. Sheer willpower and discipline do not bring lasting change, but a change of the heart does.

Scripture shows the internal and external are not mutually exclusive: "As a [wo]man thinks in [her]his heart, so is [she]he" (Proverbs 23:7). The Proverbs 31 woman "opens her mouth with wisdom" (the internal) and "strengthens her arms" (external). In verse 25, "Strength" represents both an internal and external strength.

Science shows proper nutrition and exercise (external) can influence your mind and emotions (internal). God never intended for us to live in fear, anger, guilt, or shame – those are internal handicaps that can hinder our external efforts to build His kingdom. The enemy may not have us for eternity, but if he can render us ineffective on earth, it's the next best thing.

Whether you desire to improve your spiritual health or your physical health, lasting change comes when you stop "trying" and commit once and for all to a change of heart. In Luke 10:27 we are told to "... love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind." The tools to do this are not merely physical – they are spiritual. 

## Single... still

By Kristina Cravey



After graduating from BBC, I moved back home eager to start my teaching career. After the excitement of the new job finally wore off though, I found myself saddened that Mr. Right still had not walked into my life. Single at 24 years old doesn't really seem like a big deal, but when 24 turned into 26 and then 28, I found myself discouraged at times. All I knew to do was press into the Lord and lean on Him for encouragement.

Then, at the age of 29, God brought the perfect guy for me into my life at a time when I least expected it, and in a way I never thought possible. God's plan for my life was different than I envisioned, but His plan was perfect. Here are a few principles that helped me through my season of singleness:

### Look back on what God has done for you.

I saw God consistently provide for me in my teaching career. He always had me in the right place at the right time, and when it was time to move, He moved me through open doors. It reminded me God was in control.

### Surround yourself with people who love you.

I may have been spouseless, but never once was there a lack of people who loved me. I had my family, my friends, and my church family! We need people in our lives who will lift us up in encouragement when we need it most.

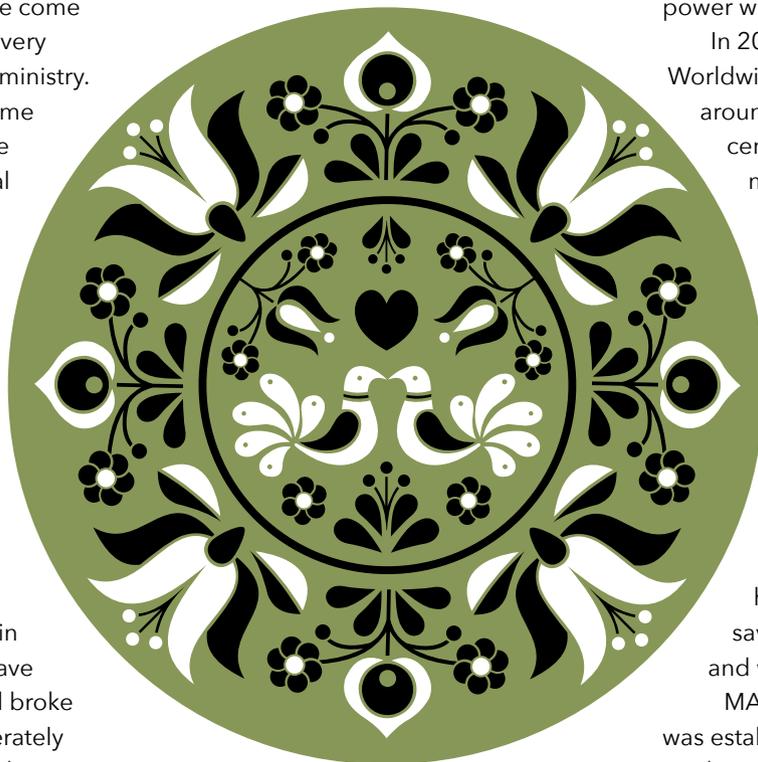
**Stay faithful.** I knew I had a calling from the Lord to serve Him with all my heart ... regardless of my marital status. So every time there was an opportunity to serve at church or my job, I showed up with joy in my heart. I knew I was doing kingdom work, and that was what was most important. 

# A global impact on women

By Keri Kondracki

In my 20 years of mission work, I've come to realize there is brokenness in every country, community, and aspect of ministry. The good news is, Jesus did not come for those who are well, but for those who are sick and in need of spiritual healing (Matthew 9:10-12).

My foreign work began after graduating from Baptist Bible College in Springfield, MO. I taught in Christian schools during the semester and I served the Lord on foreign soil during summer and spring breaks. This is where my love and passion for women's ministry began to thrive. In 1999, I was invited to lead a small group of ladies for a month of mission work in India – one of the hardest areas I have ever encountered. It was there God broke my heart for the broken lives desperately in need of a Savior. Later, while teaching women in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 2010, I realized the importance of building strong, solid women's ministries in dark areas. These women are often neglected, invisible, undervalued, abused, alone, and broken – such as the women and young



girls I saw who were locked in buildings in Prague (one of the hottest spots for human trafficking in all of Europe). The Lord has given me multiple opportunities in which to share His love, forgiveness, and healing

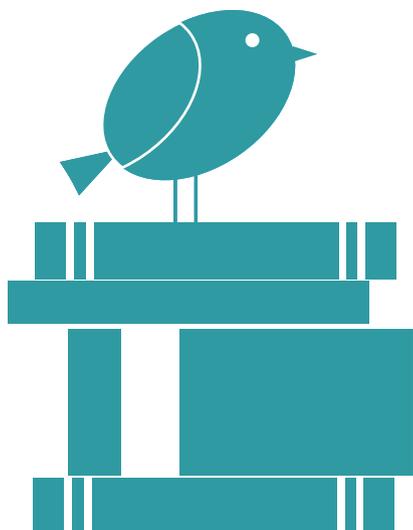
power with abused women and children.

In 2013, I partnered with MANNA Worldwide to help women and children around the world through nutrition centers, schools, family homes, medical clinics, clean water projects, sports programs, and church plants. While visiting one of our Roma (Gypsy) centers in Tinca, Romania, I learned the hungry mothers stand outside the nutrition center waiting to eat the scraps once their children have eaten. These women are broken. They, too, are in need of physical, spiritual, educational, and emotional healing. They must hear about a savior who loves them, died for them, and wants to change their lives forever!

MANNA's Women's Ministry Europe was established not only to reach the mothers of the children we feed each day, but to partner with the women who work in our feeding centers, family homes, schools, and church plants. We want to teach, train, and offer assistance to them so they, in turn, can minister more effectively in their communities. 

## {Reaching through teaching}

By Georgia Webb



My principal ministry responsibility has always been teaching. At first I taught children in the churches and in starting new works, then young people, and for many years I taught mostly women, now I teach the young people again. In addition, I taught in the Bible institute in Ciudad Mante for 14 years, followed by 22 years as director and teacher in the Querétaro Spanish Language School.

For many years I have prepared illustrated lessons for children and for women. I have made them available at cost to our churches. This seems to meet a special need for teaching materials in Spanish. Recently I received a special blessing when a young lady, about 20 years old, told me her mother had taught my lessons when he was a child and they had been a blessing to her. Now, she teaches children and would like to use the same lessons. It's great to know this ministry will go on even after I am gone to my heavenly home!

Source: *Baptist Bible Tribune*, May 2012

# How to encourage your husband

By Shelley Switzer

As a Christian and a pastor's wife, I usually stop and think about the people at work or church who could use encouragement from me. Unfortunately, I was married several years before I realized I had spent so much time encouraging those around me but had neglected to use my words to build up the one person who meant the most to me. As a result, when I am asked, "Do you have any advice for marriage?" this is part of my response:

## REALIZE HE NEEDS YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT

An encourager is one who gives strength, one who gives courage. We know God is our refuge and strength as believers. But in Genesis 2:18, God says, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." That's us, wives! We get to be that suitable helper God can use

to infuse strength and courage into our husbands.

As a pastor, my husband, Steve, deals with people every day. He gives advice, counsels, comforts, encourages, and shares truth like a champ. He does his job so well and seems so confident. Imagine my surprise when one day he looked at me and said, "I don't think I can do this anymore." As we talked, all of a sudden he said, "Wait, you think I'm a good preacher?" Well duh! (I didn't say that, but I wanted to.) As I sat there stunned, I thought, "Have I never said it out loud before?" I had said it to others but I had never said it specifically to him. Oh, I had said little things like, "Good job, babe." But, I had never told him why it was good. I had never told him what I saw that made him so amazing. Which leads me to step two.

## USE YOUR WORDS

Ephesians 5:33 says wives must respect their husbands. Respect is an action. And though actions speak louder than words, sometimes our husbands need to hear us say things like ...

- I believe in you
- I trust you
- I respect that you work every day to provide for me

- I admire your wisdom in handling that situation
- Thank you for taking care of the yard, house, kids, etc.
- I respect that you go to church with me (if your husband doesn't go to church tell him thanks that he gives you the opportunity to go)
- You are still handsome and I would choose you all over again

Do not assume he knows you think these things. Your simple yet sincere words of encouragement could just be the courage and strength he needs to face another day.

## PRAY

Pray for your husband. Pray with your husband. Pray scripture for your husband. When Steve went through his discouraging time, I chose Psalm 86 and prayed it daily. I especially love verse 4: "Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you." I would pray, "Bring joy to your servant, Steve, Lord, for He puts his trust in you." There really is power in praying scripture.

I read a quote the other day that said, "Behind every great man, there is an encouraging wife!" Who knows what greatness your husband can achieve if you infuse a little strength and courage into him. 



## What pastors' wives wished their husbands knew about them

By Barb Milioni

**LOVE ME.** The apostle Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25). I need to know I am more important than board meetings and men's gym nights. I appreciate Mark making time for me doing things we enjoy together.

**LOVE OUR FAMILY.** There are many ministers, but our kids have only one dad. They need him to make time for them. Mark drives our children to school every morning, taking time to talk and laugh, giving them a few minutes of undivided attention from dad.

**KNOW MY LIMITS.** Contrary to popular belief, pastors' wives are not auditioning for the role of Superwoman. Mark and I try to set goals



# Women in ministry

By Cindy Lyons

I was born into a ministry family. Growing up, the stories we celebrated around the table were those of people who had come to Christ and how their lives had changed. As I grew up seeing my parents serve, and seeing God do a mighty work, I wanted to be part of what God was doing. I started serving anywhere they would let me. As a 12-year-old girl, I surrendered to the Lord to do whatever He called me to do. I have never regretted saying yes to God.

We can all be part of His plan to reach the world – whether single, married, a student, or a woman who is retired or changing professions. God wants to use us in His plan at every stage of life. The first step is to make ourselves available to Him.

Here a few lessons I have learned over years:

## WALK IN YOUR CALLING AND EXERCISE YOUR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS.

God is raising up gifted teachers, communicators, writers, administrators, Bible translators, counselors, prayer warriors, artists, musicians, health professionals, and more. He calls them to serve in fulltime ministry or in the profession He placed them. Women are relational and nurturing, beautifully designed not only to take care of families but also to minister to people.

## PREPARE TO LEARN AND GROW.

To become effective women in ministry, we need to be prepared and keep growing. We do this by staying in the Word, learning from books, Bible studies, conferences, etc., and seeking mentors. Learn how to

work well with people, study and teach effectively, counsel, stay encouraged, and help people.

## GOD CALLS US TO A WELL-BALANCED LIFE.

I am a child of God first, then I am a wife and mother. They are my first ministry. God has also equipped and called me to minister to others. He gives us wisdom to carry out that calling in the different seasons of our lives.

## WE NEED MEANINGFUL FRIENDSHIPS.

They are part of God's design. Jesus had friends on his journey. We can be more effective and thrive when we have someone with whom to process the joys and challenges of ministry.

## WE NEED TO GET STRONG.

The ministry has many blessings, but there is also stress, criticism, betrayal, and disapproval. We must learn how to put on our armor, get strong, and stand firm in the Lord. Don't let the enemy win by giving up. Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world! Become a warrior, not a victim!

I am in awe God let me be a wife, mom, missionary, teacher, and pastor's wife. He is faithful and changes lives. I am still thrilled every time God allows me to lead someone to Christ or help someone take a step closer to Him. If I could, I would do it all over again. Let us rise up and embrace our calling! 

and priorities together. We pray before committing to anything to make sure God is leading us. We've also learned we can say no to certain tasks.

## PROTECT ME PHYSICALLY, SPIRITUALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY.

Mark doesn't tell me everything about the ministry. He's not leaving me out; he is protecting me.

**LAUGH WITH ME, NEVER AT ME.** Though my early efforts at "tuna-spaghetti casserole for two" could have helped Jesus feed the 5,000, Mark waited until I laughed before he joined in. There are some things I'd rather the congregation not know about and I don't

want to be the subject of a sermon illustration or joke that will hurt my feelings or humiliate me. And, I never want Mark to use a story from our lives without first asking my permission.

**PRAY FOR ME.** I struggle not only with my own battles, but also with the awareness of my husband's burden for the flock. I know how much it hurts when someone strays, the energy he expends with a family in crisis, the hours he spends preparing to feed the sheep. So I want Mark to pray I will be sensitive to his needs, I will be wise in my counsel, I will be gentle with my tongue, and that our home will always be one where he is happy to return. And while he's at it, I also want him to pray just for me, personally. 

# Women's ministry in the church

By Stephanie Housley

**W**omen's ministry in the local church has changed through the years, however it still has a vibrant place among ministries today. A great aspect of the BBFI movement is the diversity in our churches. Each must evaluate what works best for their body. Beyond that, we know these core values we share that do not fail:

**Women need to be encouraged to read the Word of God.** As a matter of fact, I find it is what women want most. No opinion or self-help book can take the place of what the Bible has to say regarding everyday life. Truth stings at times, but it meets that inner longing for answers.

**Women need to be reminded of their inner source.** The Holy Spirit is there to guide us in our daily routines and help us make the difficult decisions of life.

**Women need to pursue the power of prayer.** When we truly spend time pouring our hearts to God, we come to realize the power within us.

**Women understand women!** We are complicated, wonderful creatures of God. I read a quote about women recently that said, "I am under no obligation to make sense to you." I'm sure this was meant for a man and that's exactly my point. We may be wives, mothers, sisters, caregivers, professionals, and hold a number of responsibilities in and outside the church, but one thing remains the same, we understand one another's feelings.

Our ladies' ministry at Park Crest chooses to hold on-campus small group studies through the year that allow women to connect. Studying the Word of God

and gleaning from different ages and experiences knits hearts together as a family should. It is also a great avenue to invite women who are searching for answers in our world. Relationships connect us and allow us to share Christ.

We also choose several large events each year to draw us together – from travelling to conferences, to hosting holiday celebrations, to just having fun. Our best-attended event was a painting class. Sounds simple, but it brought in women from the community, which then connected them to women of our church.

Women's ministry can be a great tool to meet the needs of women in our world today. Each stage of life offers its own challenges. Evaluating your ministry needs and setting goals on what you want to accomplish with the ladies of your church is a great place to start. It ultimately allows us to encourage one another, build each other up, and reach those in need of the Gospel. 

## {Timeless truths}

By Tiffany Lyons

**W**e are called to lead people to Jesus and connect them to their God-given purpose, all within the local church. Women's ministry is an outworking of that basic and vital mission. If we don't support and rally around women, they will look to fulfill their needs somewhere other than God and the church.

**Community.** Women are looking for a place to belong. No matter what a woman's circumstance or life stage, she is a woman, and that is the connection. Whether in small groups, Bible studies, or big events throughout the year, the church needs to provide opportunity for women to find meaningful community.

**Purpose.** Women are also looking for purpose. Ephesians 4:2 says we are to equip God's people for works of service, so the body of Christ may be built up. Jesus invited women to participate in his earthly ministry and continues to invite women to be part of what he is doing today!

**Q.** AS AN ADULT WOMAN, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL YOU RECEIVE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FROM THE PEOPLE AT YOUR CHURCH?

**A.** 17%.....very much so  
23%.....somewhat  
17%.....not so much  
43%.....not at all

Source: [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org), 2015

**Leadership.** Today, women hold vital leadership roles all over the world. We need to come alongside these strong women and equip them to lead in their spheres of influence. We can no longer limit women's ministry topics to marriage and motherhood. While these topics are vital and must continue to be part of what we teach, we must also be a place leaders can come to learn and lead with strength while embracing their God-given feminine hearts.

I don't know what the future of women's ministry looks like, but I hope it's where a woman can find a place to belong, discover God's love and purpose, find joy from serving in the local church, and be inspired to lead.

# Flourish!

*Living out your calling to the fullest*

By Karen Baird

Do you remember, as a child, being asked what you wanted to be when you grew up? If you were like me, many answers came to mind. As adults we're asked, "If you could do anything what would it be? Psalm 139:13 tells us, "For you have possessed my reins: you have covered me in my mother's womb." His plan for our lives doesn't start once we enter school, or start going to church, or complete our education, or get married, or have a family, or even acknowledge Him and accept Him into our hearts. His plan for our lives begins at conception, in our mothers' wombs.

As women of faith, we search for God's will in our lives, and many times finish our lives with regrets and longing that were never quite fulfilled. John 10:10 tells us, " ... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Once we accept Christ, the next step is walking with him in "abundant" life! Only one thing is required of you when you accept Christ, faith – utter faith in who Christ is and what he has accomplished for you on the cross. That's it! But once your redemption takes place, there are requirements of you by God to live Galatians 5:22-23, the fruits of the Spirit. This is where you will find your purpose

in service to God. It's not mysterious. It's about complete obedience to God's Word and commands and continued conversation and communication with Him through prayer and the study of His Word.

Years ago, during a season of life as a wife, mother, pastor's wife, director of a preschool, teacher, musician, continuing my education, homemaker, daughter, sister, friend ... you get it, I was wearing many hats ... I realized I wasn't doing anything to the best of my ability for God. One day, a godly author and speaker inspired me to simply give everything in my life back to God – everything – and then wait patiently for what He would return back to me. This led to a year-long journey of watching God give back to me and also take many things away. It surprised me, it frightened me, it even crushed me. But I came out ready for what He had next for my husband, our children, and me – a life of international missions. That was 2004 and I would not

trade my walk and service to Christ before that time, and I certainly wouldn't trade the service and incredible calling He has placed upon my life since that prayer.

Can I encourage you, no matter how many good and fruitful things you are accomplishing for the kingdom, will you stop right now and give everything back to God? Will you confirm with God that everything you are doing in your life is His will? May we live out the fruits of the Spirit that are right now dwelling in our hearts, according to His plan and purpose, and may we fight the good fight, finish the course, keep the faith, knowing that in the future there is laid up for us the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to us on that day (2 Timothy 4:7). 



# Overcoming family challenges

By Sheri Quidley

Saturday, August 31, 2014, began like any other day in our home. I got up early to have coffee and Jesus time. About an hour later, Scott came downstairs ready to head to the church for his normal weekend workday. But, as we stood in our kitchen talking, I could tell he was short of breath. “Do you feel ok? Why are you taking such shallow breaths?” I asked. He simply said, “I don’t know.” He left and we weren’t together again until later that afternoon at his parents’ house for dinner. I remember looking at him thinking he hadn’t been eating very much lately but it looked as if he had gained weight. When we got home that night, Scott was sitting on the couch coughing uncontrollably and could not catch his breath. I said, “That’s it! We are going to the emergency room!” When we arrived, he was taken back fairly quickly. The nurse checked his oxygen level and blood pressure and said, “Oh! That’s bad!” Within a matter of minutes,

Scott had been moved to a bigger room and it was filled with nurses and doctors asking us lots of questions while they worked on him. They concluded his kidneys had shut down. He was moved to ICU and immediately began dialysis. At this time the doctor told me if we had waited two hours longer to bring Scott into the hospital he would have died.

The next hours, days, weeks, and months were filled with much emotion, uncertainty of Scott’s health, and decisions that would affect our future as a family. But as I reflect back on the events, I see three things that were the most influential in helping our family through the biggest challenge we had ever faced.

The first is prayer. I am so thankful the Lord had already taught me the importance of a fervent prayer life. Because prayer was already a spiritual discipline in my life, I knew I could go to Him any time, any where, with any need

and He would answer according to His perfect will for Scott and our family. This situation our family walked through also taught our children the importance and power of prayer. We spent much time together as a family praying for Scott and his healing. What a joy to see our children’s faith grow as they watched our awesome God answer their prayers!

The wonderful support system through family and friends was another thing that helped our family. So many people were there for us ... cooking meals, taking care of our children, and going above and beyond to help in any way needed. I cannot say enough about our precious church family at McCauley Baptist during this difficult time. Scott was able to continue pastoring during all of this but his energy was limited. Our church family supported us with patience, encouragement, love, and much prayer! Our family also had many pastors, missionaries, and friends all over the world who sent us encouraging notes, money to help with medical bills, and offered up prayers on our behalf! The family of God is truly a wonderful blessing!

The last thing that helped us through this difficult time was also probably the hardest for me — trusting in the sovereignty of our Savior. That is hard to admit, but it is true. See, I like being in control. But during all of this, I was never in control, yet God was consistently faithful to show me I could trust Him with every detail. After several months of dialysis, Scott began the process of a kidney transplant. During that time, God sent a couple to our church. The husband got saved, and the wife, Delma, rededicated her life to the Lord. In March 2015, Delma graciously offered to donate her kidney to Scott and it turned out to be a perfect match! On June 17, 2015, Scott received the new kidney! And praise God ... he is doing excellently!

I may never know to the full extent of why God allowed our family to face such a challenge. But this I can say, we are a stronger family because of it and the Lord never once failed us. God is good all the time and all the time God is good!

*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?*



*and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.*