

Women

Serving

Women

*Developing Effective Women to Women
Ministry through the Local Church*

Participant Workbook

*The older women are likewise to be . . .teaching what is good,
that they may encourage the young women. . . Titus 2:3-4*



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Preface

Women Serving Women was developed by Entrust as part of a comprehensive effort to help prepare women for ministry to other women in particular, in the context of the local church. In this course women will learn, discuss and practice basic skills and perspectives needed for ministry. We believe that meeting in small groups, led by effective facilitators, is the best format for a transforming adult learning and relating environment. Therefore, this material is designed to be used in such an interactive context. Participant completion of the reading and homework prior to the discussion sessions is key to an effective group experience.

Women Serving Women was written as a collaborative effort by various staff members of Entrust. Thanks also to Church Growth Institute for use of their Spiritual Gifts Inventory and to Ken Voges for his DISC Inventory and temperament material. Finally, thanks to Lorraine Schukar for editing, Gae Cusbert for formatting, and Wendy Wilson for project coordination.

Through purposeful and loving relationships with each other, and built on responsible and relevant study and application of God's good Word, it is our sincere hope to see more women equipped to develop and carry out significant ministry to the great numbers of women in the Body of Christ around them locally and in the world. As the needs of women are more effectively met and their gifts are more intentionally discovered and given opportunity for expression, unimagined blessing can come to and through the church!

Facilitating this Course with Others: When you are ready to facilitate this course with others, you will need to order a copy of the *Women Serving Women Facilitator Guide* to guide you as a facilitator through the many areas of significant skill practice and emphasis that participants need in order to build on the work they have done in this workbook. This guide is only the homework preparation that participants bring to the actual training times, not "stand-alone" material. The *Facilitator Guide* is designed to help the facilitators guide the participants thoroughly and meaningfully through this learning process. To order the *Women Serving Women Workbook* and/or *Facilitator Guide* go to www.entrust4.org/WSW to download the order form.

Icons



Assignment: a question or study that focuses on course content. Written responses are required and are to be recorded in the participant's notebook



Personal Reflection: an instruction to reflect on scriptural truths or character traits or both as they relate to one's walk with God. The focus is on personal application. A written response may be requested.



Adoration: an instruction to worship the Lord with reference to course content. The focus is on God. No written response is required.

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The Biblical Basis and Calling of Women in Ministry

Objectives: To validate the biblical authority of women serving the Lord in various capacities and giftings.

To develop confidence in women that God has equipped them for what He calls them to be and do.

To cultivate respectful discussion and biblical evaluation of this important topic.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's culture we are immersed in change and the rate of that change is accelerating. Perhaps change is our only constant. As a result ideas and traditions are challenged and long held convictions seriously questioned. Perhaps nowhere is this change more evident than in our understanding of women and their place in both church and society. It is no wonder that women find themselves confused and uncertain about how to live in obedience to God.

How shall the church today understand God's plan for women? What has been your understanding? Many women we have met around the world believe they have little to offer the church and are therefore fearful of stepping into opportunities presented to them.

If we respond to culture to determine a women's place, we will experience the ground continually shifting under our feet. There is, however, a better way. We have access to the words of an unchanging God and His revelation regarding women and their unique roles in His creation.

The Bible provides a stable reference point to discover a firm confidence in becoming all God created a woman to be. In this lesson we will examine from the Old and New Testament unchanging realities to inform us as women. This understanding results in a growing confidence to obediently step into the purpose for which He has created us and contribute to His purposes for the world. There is a broad spectrum of gifts that are given for a broad spectrum of needs in the church and the world, and endless creativity in offering them through our women.

Defensiveness and fear fall away when we understand we are not stepping outside our design but rather stepping into it! Jot down your answer to the following questions:



How do you think our generation has understood the contribution of women to the work of God's Kingdom? What aspects of this current practice and understanding do you think are correct and helpful? Incorrect and unhelpful perhaps? What is the importance of evaluating tradition vs. truth generation to generation?

II. ESTHER – A WOMAN OF COURAGE and CALLING

As women have opportunity to serve in our churches, we look to the Scripture to discern how God used women in significant ways in the past. An outstanding example for us is found in the little book of Esther. Esther was a woman who lived in difficult circumstances, had a difficult marriage, and yet she was used to change the fate of her entire nation. Women, even in difficult personal circumstances, can make a significant difference in God's purposes.

We will consider this book from three perspectives and see what we can learn about how God uses women for His purposes. We will see that He prepares us, we must risk obedience, and seek His wisdom in acting for Him. You might say that for every time there is exists a prepared person, a real risk, and a wise way. Let's consider these together, beginning with "a prepared person."

A. For Every Time There is a Prepared Person

God is continually preparing persons for His good purposes in the world and in eternity. In the book of Esther, we see that God not only prepared Esther, but He prepared a place for her as well. God goes before His own, preparing for the purposes as well as the difficulties he knows will be in their future. This should comfort us as we face the future. Nothing in it takes God by surprise.

Let's consider how God prepares Esther for the calling He has invited her to.



Read Esther 1-2 and reflect on the following questions:

In what specific ways do you see God preparing Esther?

How do you sense that God has prepared you in the past for something ahead?

How does it comfort you to know that God has prepared the way before you?

How are you cooperating with God as he prepares you in the present?

As we reflect on how God has prepared us, each of us can see that He has used circumstances in our own lives to prepare us for our present purposes. For example, in one woman's life, she recounts that before she ever understood the gospel and came to Christ, she participated in the debate team in high school. She sees now that

she learned how to speak before an audience and how to think on her feet. This preparation in public speaking prepared her for her present opportunities to teach the Bible and speak before an audience.

B. For Every Time There is a Real Risk

Responding to God's invitation requires risk in faith. Even though God prepares you and prepares the place, He offers the invitation for you to participate in His purposes. He will not force you to serve Him. He invites you to be a part of His plan and our response usually requires the risk of faith. Several "risks" are often involved in obedience. The first is the risk of control. We must choose to allow God to be the one who is in control, not us. Obedience will also require a risk of sacrifice - of time, of energy, or money.

Let's consider Esther's opportunity and her response.



In chapters 3-4, what dangers and risks do you see Esther encountering?

How does she respond to these risks?

What risks/costs do you see in responding to the preparation and call of God on your life at this time?

Deborah felt the Lord wanted her to serve in another country. The opportunity that was presented to her was a perfect match for her abilities and background. But that meant she would have to give up her secure job, raise support, and move far away. What should she do? It is difficult to raise support. What would you do? Her decision was to step out in faith and risk, trusting in God to provide for her every need. And, He did just that. She has found her current work to be the most satisfying of anything she has done. That does not mean there are not rough spots along the road, but she has the satisfaction of knowing she is exactly where God wants her to be.

In reality we are not in control; it is the illusion of fallen humanity. However, the risk of faith will recognize that God is in control of this situation and we must be willing to obey, to trust, in spite of difficulty.

C. For Every Time There is a Wise Way

Even though God's way requires a risk, it is not senseless risk, without thought or plan. Again we see God at work behind the scenes preparing the circumstances for Esther. Esther senses God's timing, and waits. Her request to the King is presented in the most respectful of words and actions. Haman's own actions bring the wrath of the King on him and the gallows he prepared in bitterness become his own undoing. God's work, done God's way, will not lack God's provision.

Let's consider Esther's wise preparation and plan in dealing with her circumstances.



In Chapters 5-8, how do you see Esther exercise wisdom in preparing and planning the circumstances of executing her calling, in response to what God has put in place? How do you see Esther moving ahead in wise planning and how do you see God provide as she moves forward? As you pray about what God is inviting you to, what planning and preparing on your part do you see as necessary to move forward?

Wise preparation and planning is a key part of our response to God's invitation for impact in the world. For example, in planning a presentation to church leadership regarding ministry to women in the church, it is important that a clear plan is presented with objectives and goals that can be easily understood. In this way, both church leadership and the women whom you desire to serve and strengthen will be informed and more likely receptive and supportive.

III. WOMEN ARE AFFIRMED IN MINISTRY

As we examine what the bible reveals we will discover that women are affirmed for ministry by design, by historical examples, by Jesus example, and by scriptural injunction. We will see numerous indications that women are important to the fulfillment of the Great Commission and the healthy functioning of the church. While we may vary in faith on the particular types of service that God intends for women, there are many points of easy agreement on which we would like to focus our time in this lesson. As we progress through this study we may all find ourselves stretched in our considerations one way or the other, as the Holy Spirit will do His good work in us through His Word and His people (our discussion).



Let's pray together now for the good work of God's Spirit in us together during this time, toward unity, mutual respect, clarity, and edification around this wonderful topic of women offering their hearts and service to the Lord in ways that please and honor Him – and fulfill our design!

A. Affirmed by Design

Beginning in Genesis we discover God's original design and purpose and specifically a better understanding of God's design of woman.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the

air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Genesis 1:26-28

We first observe God in community with Himself (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) determine to create mankind in His image. The interaction, communication, and collaboration within the Trinity reflect the intrinsic connection of God’s image and community.

Additionally, from the beginning the image of God is reflected by both male and female, human beings. Being created in God’s image means having both male and female genders. The act of creation of man and woman to reflect God’s image is done in community as well – male and female as mankind in two persons. We discover in these verses that woman is a bearer of God’s image equally with man giving her great worth and dignity.

From these verses we also learn that woman shared with man the responsibilities assigned by God in creation. They were not either/or, but both together.

Verses 26-30 commands both man and woman

- *To rule over creation*
- *To be fruitful and multiply*
- *To subdue the earth and fill it*
- *To enjoy the fruit of the earth*

Because God made both man and woman in His image and gave these tasks both the man and woman we can surmise that:

- Woman is equal in nature with man as a person with intellect, emotions, will, and spirit.
- To both man and woman, as bearers of His image, God gave dominion, blessing, and the important responsibility to rule and to be fruitful.
- And He gave to both of them the pleasure of enjoying that fruitfulness.
- It is not only man or only woman, singularly, who can fulfill this commission. It is given to them both as a part of community that involves both male and female. Male and female complement each other as image bearers.
- Though we see that woman is like man, we also see in verse 27 that she is created to be different. There is a reason that this verse differentiates woman from man.
- In this way, neither man nor woman is defined by marriage itself, but each reflect the glory of God through their gender in unique ways. Marriage itself can be a means of that reflection, but it is not fundamental to the expression of God’s image through a man or through a woman as a created being and an individual before God.

Let’s consider further the passages in Genesis that speak to our original design by reading Genesis 2:15-25. From these verses we discover that women are designed to

more fully express various aspects of God's image in creation. This also qualifies them for ministry in ways different from men.

- a. Women have a unique connection to what is human and personal. This ability provides strength in connecting people to each other through relationships in the family, in the church, and in the community. It is interesting to realize that because Adam was already created, Eve entered into a world where human relationships were available (i.e. Adam) whereas Adam had experienced a world prior to human relationships (which God declared *not good*). Also, she was created from Adam's side, his very person. Perhaps that is why women have a bent toward relational connections.

This passage gives us a greater understanding of how God designed woman with a different clarity on needs around her. God chose different ways to create the man and the woman.

- 1) God worked with the dust of the earth to form man. Then He breathed His own life into man. Man has a unique connection with the earth.
 - When Adam was alone there was something missing that was not good. God meets this need in making woman. "I will make a helper suitable for him." The fact that God took the rib from Adam and formed woman pictured that his incompleteness was made complete.
 - God's image was not complete when Adam was alone. Something was missing? God formed Eve from Adam's humanity, and human community was set in motion.
- 2) God worked with bone, flesh, and blood to form woman.
 - Here is a picture of something warm, human, and personal in the way God formed woman and the material He used.
 - Woman has a unique connection to what it means to be human, with a special connection to others.
 - Woman was formed from a human being, from a person.
 - She has a capacity to see life in a way that man does not have as clearly. Likewise, he has a capacity to see life in a way that she does not have as clearly. They complement each other.
 - When she was created as a "suitable helper," she was given a unique role.
- b. A "suitable helper" is someone who completes, encourages, and nurtures to success. Unfortunately, the word "helper" has too often been described with a connotation of inferiority. It was only after the fall or first sin of man that the idea of superiority and inferiority appeared. After the fall, man began to exploit the natural desire of woman to nurture and to complete, and the woman began to disrespect the natural desire of the man to shape his environment and she began to manipulate him.

The Hebrew word "ezer" translated as "helper" is used 19 times in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7; Pss 10:14; 33:20). Four of those are used

of people who help each other at a *peer level*. 15 times it refers to *God as the helper of people*. But never, in any of the 19 verses, is it used to describe someone inferior helping someone superior.

- In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is described as our Helper – someone alongside us – not only to help us, but also to strengthen us.
- It also seems this is not something we are designed to express only in marriage, but it is a unique way we are created to function in creation, in community.
- The role of helper is not one of diminished personhood but rather of using the feminine strengths of nurture and intuition about the well-being of others in whatever ways God calls her to live out her life.

What have you discovered in our study to this point that is particularly meaningful or a new thought to you? In your own words contrast and compare the idea of “helper” used for the woman, and for God the Father and the Holy Spirit. How does that affect your understanding of the creation of woman?



God created women for special and personal connections to humanity and for a unique position in the world. Men reflect God’s image in their strength, initiative and protection. God’s image in women is especially reflected through their warmth and compassion. While men and women both share these qualities at some level, there is something about male and female design that reflects more clearly some aspects of His Image. God Himself declared that the masculine reflection of His image alone was not complete. Therefore, He made woman. Likewise, women cannot reflect the full image of God alone.

We see in Genesis 1-3 that women have value and are qualified for ministry by design. Woman, like man, bears the image of God. She shares in the commission given by God to rule, to be fruitful and multiply, and to take pleasure in the earth. But the way in which she fulfills this responsibility will look different from the way the male will fulfill it.

When only men are involved in ministry in the church, we rob each other of the special capacity for which God designed us as women, and vice-versa. Women need to be involved in ministry, especially women with women. If we do not participate, only part of His ministry is being done, and the world will not see the full reflection of the true image and wisdom of God displayed in the church.

B. Women Affirmed by Old Testament Examples

The Old Testament is filled with key women who trusted and obeyed God in a wide variety of ways. Reading about their lives encourages us to see how God uses women from every walk of life to participate in His purposes. Make notes of your observations as you look at the following passages and the women described in them.

Sarah (1 Pet 3:1-6; Gen 21:8-12; 22:18) Sarah provides a model to follow in relationship to husbands. 1 Peter 3 challenges women to remember the gracious model of Sarah who treated her husband with respect. If you read Sarah’s story in the various Old Testament passages you will find that she was not a doormat; she was

feisty and strong, yet protective and supportive of Abraham. Indeed God told Abraham to listen to whatever Sarah tells you, using the same word used for obeying God in another passage. Most of us would frequently like for God to tell our husbands to do what we say as well! (Compare Genesis 21:12 with Genesis 22:18)

Miriam (Exod 15:20-21; Mic 6:4) It is clear from the biblical record that Miriam, Moses sister, was considered a leader in Israel. She was called a prophetess (one who speaks God's word) and was called by God to partner with Moses. (Mic 6:4) Indeed, it was Miriam who courageously rescued Moses from the river when he was an infant. God used her in significant ways in the life of Moses and Israel.

Deborah (Judg 4:4-14; 5:1-3, 7) The account of Deborah's leadership includes military service as she led the army along with Barak whom she challenged to obey God. She was another who was called a prophetess and she was also a judge who listened to and settled disputes for the people of Israel. Deborah was also a gifted poet as she and Barak sang praise to God for the victory He had given them over their enemies.

Hannah (1 Sam 1:1-2, 11; 9:25-10:2; 16:1-13) Hannah was a woman facing one of the most difficult experiences for a woman, infertility. In the day in which she lived this was considered a disgrace and it deeply grieved Hannah. In her distress she turned to God making a vow regarding her desire for a child even when misunderstood by Eli. When Samuel was born, Hannah honored her vow and presented Samuel to the Temple for God's service. Her son, Samuel, impacted the nation of Israel in worship of God, anointed two kings and following her example of devotion to Yaweh. No doubt her influence on Samuel was key to his devotion to God.

Abigail (1 Sam 25:1-42) In Abigail we have a woman living in a very difficult marriage who demonstrates courage, wisdom and creative initiative to rescue both her husband and her household. Not only did she demonstrate wisdom in intervening with David, but also she challenged him to consider his relationship to God in his hasty revenge.

Huldah (2 Kgs 22:11-20) Huldah lived in the same time period with Jeremiah and Zephaniah in Jerusalem. King Josiah discovered the neglected law of God and after reading it sent Hilkiah, the high priest at the time, to inquire of the Lord as to what to do. These men went to Huldah to hear counsel from the Lord even though Jeremiah and Zephaniah were also living in Jerusalem at the time. Their actions demonstrated the value they placed on Huldah's walk with God and her role as prophetess, not as a default choice in the absence of qualified men.

Esther (2:16-20; 4:10-16; 5:1-8; 7:1-6; 8:1-8) In one of the most dramatic books of the bible Esther's story reveals God changing history through the obedience of one woman. Her courage and risk of her own life brought deliverance to the Jew. Her personal commitment to obedience is captured in her words, "If I perish, I perish." Esther demonstrated amazing patience, wisdom, strength, and creativity in her interactions with a volatile ruler. She had a unique opportunity because of her gender and beauty.

The Inspiring Woman (or composite of women) in Proverbs (Prov 31:10-31) This chapter in Proverbs can overwhelm a woman unless you can appreciate that this passage reveals the wide scope of activities available to a woman throughout her life, not necessarily all at the same time. The woman feared God, cared for her family, managed her home and fully utilized all her many abilities and talents. As a businesswoman she bought and sold property as well as manufactured and retailed textiles. Her husband was honored and respected by all, including her, and her children brought her praise. Her strength was used to bring glory to God and demonstrates the many opportunities available to a woman.



What new thought or insight have you gained about God's view of women have you gained from these short studies? Which of the women above do you most relate to? Why?

Not only can we see that women were used for great purpose in God's program of the Old Testament, but we also discover women's great value and purpose from observing the life of Jesus and His interaction with them. Let's look at this from the New Testament.

C. Women Affirmed by Jesus in the New Testament

In this section we will highlight several aspects of how Christ related to women during His earthly ministry. They are particularly significant when you consider how very counter-cultural these actions were in His day. As you look at the following passages, make notes of your observations related to women being affirmed in the Scripture.

First, one of God's greatest eternal works came through a woman—the incarnation. Jesus came into the world through Mary (Lk 2:6-7). The Son of God submitted to her in His humanity. He listened to her and provided for her care when He was hanging on the cross (Lk 2:51; Jn 2:1-11; 19:25-27). Mary's responsive obedience to God's plan inspires all women to emulate her and the opportunity reflects God's view of the key role of women in humanity.

In a culture of that time where Rabbis would rather teach a dog than a woman and some would not even speak to their wives in public, Jesus taught women spiritual truths and spoke publicly to them. He spoke openly with the Samaritan woman about eternal life and offered her one of the clearest revelations of who He truly was. (Jn 4:10-30; 39-42)

Jesus taught Mary in her own home in the presence no doubt of men and even while kitchen duties were calling. He admonished Martha that Mary "had chosen the better part" when Martha rebuked Mary for neglecting her hostess duties. (Lk 10:38-41)

Luke records for all generations Mary's worshipful praise to God after her encounter with the angel and the prophecy of Jesus' birth. Her words have inspired and instructed the church from its inception, canonized as part of the Holy Scripture, teaching men and women throughout the ages.

Jesus repeatedly demonstrated respect, compassion and sensitivity toward women.

- The woman who washed His feet with her tears and poured perfume on them was an example of how He treated a repentant sinner, even when others rejected her (Lk 7:36-50).
- He healed them (Simon's mother, Lk 4:38-39; the woman with the bleeding disorder, Lk. 8:43-48; the crippled woman in the synagogue, Lk 13:10-17).
- He raised them and their loved ones to life (Jairus' daughter, Lk 8:40-56; Lazarus, Jn 11:1-44).
- He used illustrations with which women could identify (yeast, Lk 13:20; a lost coin, Lk 15:8-10; pain of childbirth, Jn 16:21-22).
- He defended them against unjust criticism by His own followers, and accepted and commended them publicly (the woman poured oil on His head, Mk 14:1-9; Mary used expensive perfume on His feet, Jn 12:1-8).

Jesus was loved by and ministered to by women. They were final witnesses to His death and first witnesses to His resurrection. (Lk 23:27, 49, 54-56; 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-2, 10-18). Women travelled with Jesus and supported Him from their financial resources. (Matt 27:55; Lk 8:1-3) These women never deserted Him. It was a woman who was entrusted first with the greatest news of all time, the message of Christ's resurrection. She was given the opportunity to carry this amazing news back to the male disciples. (Jn 20:11-18)

We can discern from the way Jesus related to women and the way they related to Him the great value Jesus placed on women. He understood their design as the one who created them and who enjoyed them in their perfection before the Fall. He laid down His life that they might be restored to full relationship with Him. He loved them equally with men.



How were any of the above examples new or surprising to you? What other examples or observations did you have? At this point, how might you summarize Jesus' view of women?

D. Women Are Affirmed for Ministry through Redemption

What significance for our lives do you find in the fact that both men and women are reconciled to God in the same way – through Christ by faith? Consider the following:

1. A great price was paid for the redemption of all women.
The precious blood of Christ has redeemed all Christians, women and men (1 Pet 1:18-19). Women can have a healthy sense of self-worth and feel confident to minister.
2. The way of salvation is the same for men and women. In Christ there is no superiority or inferiority based on race, social class, or gender. In Christ we are all equal and co-heirs according to His promise (Gal 3:26-29).

3. In Christ women, as well as men, are adopted as children of God, co-heirs with Christ, and are called priests of God (Rom 8:16-17; Gal 4:4-7; 1 Pet2:9).
4. The Holy Spirit lives within each gender. At salvation the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in each woman (Eph 2:22; 1 Jn 3:24; Rom 8:11).
5. Women receive spiritual gifts. At salvation all are given spiritual gifts(1 Cor 12:7-11). The gifts are giving without regard to gender. All gifts can and need to be exercised in the context of women to women ministry!

E. The Example of the Early Church Affirms Women for Ministry

There is historical precedent for ministry by women. Consider the following:

1. Women were present with the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4, 18).
2. Women were active in ministry in the early church.
 - a. They were involved in works of compassion. Dorcas, who was a disciple, a helper of widows and the poor, and a generous, skilled homemaker, was raised from the dead by Peter (Acts 9:36-41).
 - b. The first convert in Europe was a woman. Lydia hosted the church at Philippi in her home (Acts 16:11-15).
 - c. Women were co-workers in spreading the gospel message (Phil 4:2-3). Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, taught Apollos (Acts 18:18-19, 24-26; Rom 16:3-4).
 - d. Other women were important in the life and ministry of Paul, as revealed in his closing comments in Romans (Rom 16:1-16).
 - e. Some women were prophetesses; Philip's daughters prophesied (Acts 21:8-9).



What encourages us from the examples of women in the early church?

What has been your personal experience with ministry by women? What attitudes have you experienced?

F. Other Scripture Affirms Women for Ministry

Taking the entirety of the biblical revelation into account, we see women making significant and life changing impact for God's purposes. Take note of these additional thoughts:

1. Women are encouraged through scriptural commands to use the spiritual gifts they have received for the building up of the body (1 Pet 4:10; 1 Cor 12:7). They need to be biblically released and mobilized in all their gifts for the sake of God's Kingdom and the health of the church.
2. In the Greek, the word for pastor is shepherd. There is a difference between the office of pastor and the gift of pastoring. Though some believe that the Scripture indicates that the authoritative **office** of pastor or elder is the responsibility of certain qualified men, it is still true that some women are given the **gift** of pastoring or shepherding –

spiritually feeding, caring for, nurturing, and binding up the wounded. This gift is clearly needed in ministry of women to women in particular.

3. All believers, men and women, are called to fulfill the Great Commission of proclaiming the gospel and discipling others (Matt 28:19-20).
4. Women are to be prepared, and to prepare others, for service (Eph 4:11-12).
5. In 2 Timothy 2: 2, men and women are to be involved in multiplying the teaching of Paul in Christ (2 Tim 1:13-14) to others. The Greek word used for faithful or reliable “men” is *anthropos* meaning mankind, people, or ones. These reliable people are the ones to whom ministry is entrusted and they in turn teach and entrust to others. Believers, especially those gifted to shepherd like Timothy, are to be about living, teaching, and solidifying the truth of Scripture in the lives of others.
6. The Titus mandate tells us specifically that women are to minister to women. The church leadership is to delegate to older, mature women the task of teaching and training younger women in specific ways. ***For the purposes of this course, we will be giving special attention in later chapters to this wonderful, unique calling to women in particular. The ministry of women to women in biblical, practical, and fulfilling!***

It is very encouraging and challenging to see through biblical examples that God has revealed and supported the fact that women are to be used by Him in ministry.

G. Puzzling Passages to Interpret in light of Other Scripture

While the involvement of women in every area of giftedness is clearly encouraged throughout biblical teaching and modeled in the lives of saints, some passages have elicited a good degree of controversy in the universal church regarding the place of women in ministry. Although our primary focus in this course regards women ministering to women along the line of Titus 2:4, it is worthwhile to consider briefly the issues discussed in the controversy with an examination of the relevant passages. Using scripture to guide us, each woman needs to seek God’s direction for her own life regarding these passages while being willing “to agree to disagree” with Christ-loving believers who interpret them another way. This exercise of grace toward one another demonstrates love and models Romans 14:22-15:7.

As stated earlier, Scripture provides our guide for discussion. Below are some verses that have entered into the discussion of a woman’s role in ministry. Keeping in mind good interpretation principles, interpreting Scripture in light of Scripture, *we want to consider these passages in light of the other Scripture we have considered earlier in the chapter to shed light on both what these passages are intended to mean and what they cannot mean.*



The following pairs of scripture seem to imply different roles for women. Look them up in several translations. They are followed by questions to stimulate your thinking. Prayerfully read and ponder them and we will have a lively, respectful discussion of these important issues.

- Compare 1 Cor 11:4-5 and Acts 2:17-18 with 1 Cor 14:34-35.

- Compare Acts 18: 24-28 and 2 Tim 2:2 with 1 Tim 2:11-12.
 1. How does considering the context of these verses help you harmonize their meaning?
 2. How have you come to understand God's purpose and ministry for and by women in the area of gifts of communicating and leading in particular, based on all of the Scripture we have explored in this chapter?
 3. While we won't have time for a comprehensive discussion of this topic, what particular, practical questions that you are experiencing now in your church or ministry might you want to bring to the group to discuss related to women in ministry?



Reflect on your own attitude about the role of women in the church and ask God to give you His understanding of this important topic in faith, so that you can live it well! Reflect on Romans 14:22 - 15:7. Has God brought you to that place of understanding personally in response to Him, while also promoting grace and unity around issues of honest disagreement in this area. What have you discovered?

IV. PRACTICAL RATIONALE FOR WOMEN SERVING IN THE CHURCH

Now that we have looked at the plethora of teaching in the Scripture around women who served the Lord, let's consider a number of practical observations that evidence the benefits of training women to serve the Body of Christ in the pleasure of God. When 60-100% of most churches around the world are made up of women, the practical need for discipleship and shepherding is enormous. Women need to be cared for practically, nurtured spiritually, and helped to discover and deploy their giftedness for Christ's sake and the vibrancy of His church.

Regardless of our particular backgrounds and convictions about how women serve in the church overall, the ministry of women to women is clearly an area that is both biblical and needful for the sake of a healthy church. The ministry of women to women is an area in which the exercise of all the gifts toward equipping, discipling, and serving are essential.

- A. If women are guided by mature women in effective, serious studies of Scriptural truth, the problem of gossip will diminish rather than grow. The use of small groups and personal relationships with godly women will also give them a necessary and healthy outlet for **discussing their lives in productive ways, and praying toward Christ-honoring attitudes and solutions.**
- B. Significant ministry of women to women in the area of **counseling and guidance through life issues protects the church and its leadership** from the problem of sexual temptation and even immorality that so often begins when men take on the role of counselor to women. Surely this was part of the Lord's protection for us all in mandating the needful and effective ministry of women to women. Thus, women

need to be well trained and prepared to meet this challenge biblically and from a position of personal maturity.

- C. If women are growing spiritually and discovering their spiritual gifts, there will be many more servants equipped to participate in the ministry of the church. Women enjoy serving if they understand how and where to use their gifts! In this way, they are more fulfilled as well as appropriately supportive of church leadership. In general, **when women are actively encouraged to serve in the areas of their gifts and biblical calling, they will be fulfilled and satisfied**, not angry and looking to dominate church governance inappropriately. If their needs for relationship and nurture are being met, they will be healthy and effective contributors.
- D. When the relational needs of women are met in relationship with other women, they are **happier at home, at work, and in every arena of life**. Families are also affected in wonderful ways. Women who are studying God's Word, growing in their faith, and serving others provide excellent role models for their children. Their commitment to spiritual growth may also serve as a catalyst to their husband's spiritual development. Our relational priorities are one of our greatest strengths if properly tended!
- E. When married women are trained and able to join their husbands in ministering to others, **greater understanding and unity can be fostered in the home and in ministry**. As married couples labor toward a common goal, both feeling connected to this calling, they will also be able to provide needed support to each other in the face of various struggles and pressures.
- F. **Women to women ministry supports the overall goals of the church**. Ministry to women, by women and for women, to bring us closer to God and to a heart for serving and loving those around us, should exist in support of the overall ministry and goals of the church, not exist as a separate entity outside the church. This focus must be continually held before us, accountable to church leadership, given support and encouragement by leadership, and contributing to the welfare and success of the church and those who lead the church in following Christ.

While it is true in general that having men and women who are well trained to execute the various ministries of the church, women to women ministry requires mature, biblically grounded women to lead and maintain it. This course is developed to focus well on the particular need and privilege to prepare and serve our women well!



As you reflect on the practical rationale for a serious approach to preparing and serving the many women in our congregations and organizations, what personal conclusions have you drawn for your own church and your own life? What other reasons have you considered to support this aspect of ministry in the church? What concerns have you had?

V. CONCLUSION

As women, we have all received different callings and gifting from the Lord. We all live in different circumstances with different personalities and personal histories. Esther changed the course of history for her nation in spite of personal difficulty. How might you make an impact in your world if you follow God's call?

God prepared her for a task. You are being prepared to serve God in a variety of ways. **Esther faced great risk** – perhaps even her life. You also face risks of various kinds as you open yourselves to God's leading for your life. Facing risks helps us to develop greater faith in God.

Esther was wise in her preparation to meet the challenge before her. As we study together you are preparing so you will be wise in meeting the challenges before you, based on the principles found in God's Word.

Whenever we are called to make a difference God prepares us for the task; He develops our faith as we face risk; and as we study to be prepared, He provides all that we need. As God's Word gives us the encouragement and authority to offer ourselves fully for His service and enjoy Him fully, let's move ahead together to make an impact in our World in the different ways that God calls us to serve Him.



Spend some time in prayer thanking God that He has made you female in His desire to express aspects of Himself in the universe through you. Thank Him for the special ways He delights in you and invites you to participate in what He is doing around us for His glory!