



# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	9
Foreword to the 2003 Edition	11
Introduction	13
<b>Part 1 The Seed: The Word of God</b>	
1 Qualified for Ministry	17
2 Called to Ministry	29
<b>Part 2 Considering the Field</b>	
3 Identifying the Needs	47
4 Developing a Biblical Philosophy	53
5 Assessing the Culture	75
<b>Part 3 Breaking Ground</b>	
6 Developing a Design	83
7 Creating a Women's Ministries Board	95
8 Offering Electives	107
9 Sponsoring Special Events	113
10 Remembering Others Through Outreach and Support	119
11 A Special Garden: Heart-to-Heart	127

<b>Part 4 Cultivating the Garden</b>	
12 Training and Leadership Development	149
<b>Part 5 Gathering a Bouquet of Flowers</b>	
13 Expected and Experienced Results	167
<b>Part 6 An Almanac of Resources</b>	
Appendix 1 A Proposal to Establish a Women's Ministry Presented to the Governing Body of a Local Church	173
Appendix 2 Resources Available from Titus 2:4 Ministries	177
Appendix 3 Instructions for Support Groups and Outreach Ministries	185
Appendix 4 Sample Sign-up Forms for Women's Ministries Service Opportunities	195
Appendix 5 Sample Women's Ministries Flyer and Brochures	201
Appendix 6 Sample Heart-to-Heart Flyers and Brochures	209

*O n e*



## QUALIFIED FOR MINISTRY

*As children, many of us experienced the thrill* of burying a tiny seed in a Styrofoam cup and keeping daily vigil until a tentative green sprout nudged the dirt aside, unfolded, and became our own small plant. Whether it ever arrived at full maturity or not, the growing plant was reflective of whatever seed we planted: from a tomato seed, a tomato; from a flower seed, a flower; from a green bean seed, a bean plant. The future product was bound up in the seed. In much the same way, the end result in any women's ministry will depend largely upon the kind of planted seed, the source of our presuppositions and our activities.

As we look to the Bible as the seed for our planting, we can confidently expect that the result will be a ministry that reflects God's character and God's view of women. Therefore, the place to begin growing your women's ministry is with a study of what the Bible teaches about women and their responsibilities before God. This study is vital for several reasons.

### *Tradition Versus Truth*

First, we need to distinguish between tradition and biblical truth. There is a difference between tradition and Scripture. The Bible is divine and infallible; tradition is human and fallible. When tradition is based partially on Scripture and partially on culture, we must distinguish where one begins and the other ends. Discerning the impact of culture and tradition on the understanding of truth is important in planning

how to implement this essential ministry to women. The seed thoughts for any effective and lasting ministry must come from the Word of God.

### *Biblical Calling or Cultural Pressure?*

Second, social and cultural changes, such as a pervasive immorality, an increasing divorce rate, the breakdown of the extended family, and an increase in the number of mothers working outside the home, have created an atmosphere of confusion and unrest experienced by many women today, including Christian women. However, when we are pressured to develop a program centered on the needs of women in our culture rather than beginning with what the Bible teaches, we are in danger of developing a ministry with culture-bound roots. The Bible, rightly understood and applied, will provide a program that speaks with authority and power to the needs of women.

### *Commands or Confusion?*

Third, many women are hesitant to step into a significant role of ministry because they honestly believe it is not their place to do so. They have previously understood that the Bible places great restrictions on their ministry in the church, and they sincerely desire to be obedient to God's plan. They need the strong confidence of scriptural clarity to step out.

In this chapter we will examine the biblical basis for a woman's worth and God's place for her in ministry from the perspective of women as *qualified* for ministry. In the next chapter we will discuss women as *called* to ministry.

### *Qualified by Original Design*

One of the first things the Bible tells us about women is that they have been created in the image of God.

*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."*

*So 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." . . . And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Genesis 1:26–31)*

Man and woman were created *equal in nature*. They are persons of intellect, emotions, volition, and spirit. God also assigned them joint responsibility and personal accountability. They were both given dominion; the woman was co-regent with her husband. They were mutually blessed; together they were to reproduce. Neither one could have done it alone, so it was a joint blessing.

However, although created to be *equal in nature*, they were also created *different in source and in function*. Adam was created from the dust of the ground, but the woman was created from him, from a rib taken from his side (Genesis 2:21–23). Therefore, they had a different source. Their physical bodies were different, and their function in reproduction was different. Both were essential.

Not only that, but the woman is said to have a *different purpose*. She was created to be a "helper suitable to him." The word *helper* has often been misunderstood today. Some have taken it to mean a doormat, an inferior person. Interestingly, the Hebrew word translated "helper" (*ezer*) is used nineteen times in the Old Testament (for example, Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7; Psalms 10:14; 33:20). Only four times is it used to speak of people helping people, peer helping peer. The other fifteen times it is used to refer to God helping people, a superior helping an inferior. It is *never* used in any of the nineteen references of an inferior helping a superior. The term also has the meaning of someone who brings another to fulfillment.

Eve could be a "helper suitable for" Adam because she was his equal in personhood. God brought all the animals before Adam first to demonstrate that not one there was for him. He needed someone like himself. And he recognized her, exclaiming in essence, "Wow! This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." This was what he had been waiting for. She could complete him because she was his equal in personhood. Yet because Adam and Eve were different from one another, each supplied what the other one lacked.

God instituted marriage for the protection of our sexuality. Physical intimacy is one of God's richest gifts, given with love to be fully enjoyed within the protective fence of marriage, between one woman and one man. Throughout the Bible, sexuality within marriage is honored, valued, and celebrated; however, sexual relationships outside of marriage are consistently condemned. Marriage is the fence a loving God established for the protection of His people.

Man's Designer and Creator knows best how we were designed to function as His creatures. God's image is man, male and female, created equals, to be in perfect harmony

with one another and with their Creator. Man and woman were to function as His representatives on earth. They were to share equally in everything: in obedience, in blessing, in ruling and subduing, in reproducing, and in fellowshiping with God in the garden.

Therefore, the first reason that woman can enjoy a sense of worth is that she was created in God's image. She is qualified for ministry through creation.

### *Qualified by Redemption*

The second reason the Christian woman can enjoy a healthy sense of self-worth and feel confident to minister is that she was redeemed at great price. Even today, we often determine the value of an item from the price paid for it. Think of the recent sale in the millions of dollars for one painting by Picasso. How much more valuable are those who have been redeemed at the greatest price, the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the very Son of Almighty God. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18–19). "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit" (3:18).

Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." There is equality in Christ. With Him, no superiority or inferiority based on race, social class, or gender exists.

The way of salvation is the same for man and for woman. Each is a sinner. Each must personally trust Jesus Christ alone to save. Each is then forgiven, receives eternal life, becomes an adult son or daughter in God's family (Romans 8:16–17; Galatians 4:6–7), and becomes a priest with full access to God (1 Peter 2:9).

With salvation, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell each individual (1 Corinthians 6:19) and to give each one spiritual gifts without discrimination based on gender (1 Corinthians 12:7). Each person, man or woman, is responsible to live a life of dependence upon the Holy Spirit and obedience to the Lord.

A woman is qualified and equipped by redemption.

### *Qualified by Old Testament Example*

A third reason women are qualified for ministry is that in Scripture God uses women in key ministry for Him. Abraham's wife Sarah is given as a model to follow in relationship to our own husbands (1 Peter 3:1–6). Her respect and response to Abraham reflect godly submission. But Sarah was no doormat. She was outspoken and feisty, yet protective and supportive of Abraham. However, it is interesting to note in

Genesis 21:12 that God commands Abraham to obey Sarah. Most women will admit they would enjoy having a voice from heaven say to their husbands, “Do whatever she tells you to do.” That is what God did for Sarah. The same Hebrew word used for obeying God in Genesis 22:18 regarding Abraham’s obedience to God is used in 21:12 concerning Abraham’s obeying Sarah’s words regarding Hagar.

Miriam, the sister of Moses, is called a prophetess (Exodus 15:20–21), one who speaks God’s word; and in Micah 6:4 God tells Israel that He set before them as leaders Moses, Aaron, *and* Miriam. In the latter passage, Miriam is clearly called one of the leaders of Israel.

Women the Bible calls “skilled” and “willing” voluntarily contributed of their possessions and worked with their hands in constructing the tabernacle (Exodus 35:21–22, 25–26). Women served in the doorway of the tabernacle. The same word for service was used of them as for the Levites (Exodus 38:8; 1 Samuel 2:22).

Most of us remember Deborah as the one who commanded Barak to lead the army when he was unwilling to step forward into leadership. But she was also a judge of Israel and a prophetess. She lived between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim, and the children of Israel came to her for judgment. In addition, following the great victory over Sisera, she demonstrated a poetic gift as she and Barak worshiped God in a song of praise (Judges 4–5). Her words are recorded for posterity.

Hannah was a woman of total commitment to and passion for God. She had access to God, made a vow, and kept it. Her deep faith and commitment gave Israel the prophet Samuel, a leader who turned the nation around, introduced the kingdom, and anointed Israel’s first two kings (1 Samuel 9:16).

Abigail rescued her household by demonstrating great courage and initiative. She gave David wise counsel, calling him back to himself and to God, thereby saving him from taking murderous revenge (1 Samuel 25).

After the great conviction that ensued upon the reading of the Law, Josiah sent the high priest Hilkiah and his other officials to inquire of the Lord for him concerning what to do, since Israel had so long neglected God’s word. Hilkiah went to Huldah, the prophetess, for God’s directions, even though both Jeremiah and Zephaniah, also prophets of the Lord, were living in Jerusalem at the same time (2 Kings 22:11–20). It has sometimes been taught that women can do certain jobs only if there are no men available. This passage does not support that assertion.

The entire book of Esther recounts the story of a courageous young woman who risked her life and comfortable position to save her people from a murderous enemy. Her words “If I perish, I perish” are understood by all women who risk obedience to God in perplexing and difficult situations.

Proverbs 31 describes a woman who is often overwhelming to women who consider all that is written about her. Here was a priceless woman who feared God, cared

for her family, managed her home, and used all her abilities and talents. She bought and sold land, manufactured and retailed textiles, and more. The scope of her activities was almost without limit. We can gain courage, however, when we consider that most likely this list covers a lifetime of effort, with no doubt different emphases in different seasons of her life—and she had servants to assist her. Certainly we can be encouraged if we look at the freedom, authority, and scope that lay open to her. She is praised for her exemplary life, not only by her children but also by her husband.

Women in the Old Testament were provided for in the ceremonial, civil, and moral law. They participated in worship, art, family life, and community life with creativity, decisiveness, freedom, and authority. They used their gifts and talents to serve God and to influence their families and their nation. It is important to realize that they were never forbidden to speak in public in the Old Testament.

### *Qualified by the Example of Jesus*

Even in His agony on the cross, one of Jesus' last concerns was to provide for His mother's care. His attitude toward women was definitely countercultural. In a day when the rabbis said they would rather teach a dog than teach a woman and would rather burn the Torah than teach it to a woman, Jesus taught women spiritual truth (Luke 10:38–41; John 4; 11:1–44). He spoke to women publicly (John 4) when, by contrast, a rabbi would not even speak publicly to his wife. It was women who supported Jesus from their private wealth. It is also interesting to realize that Jesus let women travel with Him during His public ministry (Matthew 27:55; Luke 8:1–3).

Although women were not considered reliable witnesses in a legal matter, Jesus considered them to be valid witnesses (Luke 24:9–11). Indeed, it was to women that He gave the responsibility of being the first to testify to His resurrection. Many of Jesus' parables and illustrations contain examples with which women would particularly identify: the lost coin (15:8–10), yeast and bread (13:20–21), childbirth and labor (John 16:21). Jesus demonstrated unusual sensitivity and compassion toward women and performed miracles for them. He healed their sick and raised their dead to life (Luke 4:38–39; 8:40–56; 13:10–17; John 11:1–44). Rather than condemning them for even flagrant sexual sin, He forgave them and offered them new life (John 4:1–42; 8:1–11).

Mary's extravagant worship near His death was accepted by Jesus, and He defended her against the unjust criticism of the disciples (Mark 14:1–9; John 12:1–8). He guaranteed her remembrance in history for her love and generosity. His commendation, "She has done a beautiful thing to me. . . . She did what she could" (Mark 14:6, 8), provides insight into how God considers our talents, limitations, and opportunities when He gives us our final report card.



There is also an interesting balance between the sexes in the Gospel accounts. Both Mary the mother of Jesus and Zacharias the father of John the Baptist have a song that is recorded. In the temple, Simeon and Anna both welcomed the new baby. Jesus had conversations about the new birth with both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Peter's confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), is balanced by Martha's similar confession in John 11:27. Both a man (Luke 6:6–10) and a woman (13:10–13) were healed in the synagogue; Jesus healed both a son and a daughter and raised a son and a daughter from the dead; and, as we have said, both men and women traveled with Jesus. This amazing balance is even more striking when the culture of Jesus' day is considered.

Jesus never spoke condescendingly to women, never made derogatory jokes about women, never humiliated or exploited women. No wonder they loved Him! Moreover, women did not deny, betray, or desert Him. They were last at the cross and first at the tomb, and after the Resurrection He appeared first to a woman, Mary Magdalene.

### *Qualified by the Example of the Early Church*

What about women in the early church? Can we find historical precedent for a ministry by women? We can indeed. Women were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4; cf. 1:12–14). Like Lydia and Priscilla, many hosted the early church meetings. There were no church buildings until the third century, and therefore all the early church meetings were conducted in homes. We can be sure that if women had not been involved, those homes would not have been available.

Women were active in ministry in the early church. In Acts alone, thirty-three women are named specifically. Priscilla was a teacher who taught Apollos. She and her husband, Aquila, were an effective team in the support and spread of the gospel. Paul calls her a "fellow worker" in Romans 16 and says that she and her husband risked their lives for him. Lydia, in Acts 16, was the first convert in Europe and hosted the church at Philippi. Dorcas was called a disciple, a helper of widows and the poor and someone who used her homemaking skills (Acts 9). Philip's four daughters were prophetesses (21:8–9). A prophet speaks God's word. Is it reasonable to believe that Philip's daughters were given the gift of prophecy and then forbidden to speak? It wouldn't make sense.

Euodia and Syntyche were women who "contended" at Paul's side for the gospel (Philippians 4:2–3). They were very influential in the church at Philippi and had a valuable ministry with Paul, something rarely noted because the reference in Philippians deals with a difficulty between these two women.

In Romans 16 ten women are mentioned, eight by name, and others are included in general phrases, such as "the household of Stephanos." Junias (feminine gender

name) was a relative of Paul's whom he called "outstanding among the apostles" (v. 7). Like Stephen, in the Greek text Phoebe was called a *diakonos*, which translated means "servant," "minister," or "deacon." Furthermore, church history indicates that the early church had an order of women deacons who instructed women and prepared them for baptism. It was also recorded in Roman history that Christian women called "ministers" were imprisoned for their faith.

Phoebe is also called a *prostatis*, a Greek term meaning "patron," "protector," or "champion." This is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used. It is likely that she was like prominent Christian women today who sponsor significant projects for missions and outreach or who network to put those seeking to promote evangelism in touch with other significant people. She would pave the way with introductions.

In Romans 16 Paul refers to Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis in terms he does not use for the men. He states of the women that they all worked "hard in the Lord" (vv. 6, 12), an expression that in the Greek has the meaning of "toiling to the point of exhaustion."

Then Paul refers to Rufus's mother, "who has been a mother to me" (v. 13). How interesting to observe that Paul appreciated having a mother, just as anyone else. He never reached the point where he didn't enjoy having someone mother him a little.

Women were active in public worship. Often in reading 1 Corinthians 11 regarding women and head coverings, we become so involved in the head covering and what it is supposed to be that we forget the first words of verse 5, "And every woman who prays or prophesies." These women were speaking God's word and praying in the public worship service. Women were considered qualified and were given the opportunity to minister in the early church.

### *Qualified by Scriptural Injunction*

What about Women's Ministries today? In 1 Corinthians 12 we see that each woman receives spiritual gifts for the building up of the body, not just for herself. The gifts are given by the Holy Spirit as He chooses without discrimination based on gender. Take, for instance, the gift of pastoring. In the Greek, "pastor" is the word *shepherd*. I believe there is a difference between the office and the gift, and that whereas there should be male leadership in the *office* of pastor, more women have the *gift* of pastoring than men. What is pastoring? It is feeding, caring for, and nurturing the sheep, and binding their wounds. What does that sound like? Mothering!

Ephesians 4:11–12 tells us that gifted people are given to the church to prepare God's people for works of service. Therefore, women are to be prepared and are to prepare others for service. Titus 2:3–5 teaches us clearly that the leadership of the

church is to delegate to older, spiritually mature women the task of teaching and training the younger women in some specific ways.

In our churches today we have a great variety of ministries that are not specifically required by Scripture. But in Scripture there is a clear command for a ministry by women to women.

### *Qualified by Opportunity*

There is almost no limit to what women can do today. They can evangelize, teach, serve on church staffs and committees, and be administrators. They can be involved in education at every level, from preschool to graduate school; in children's and youth ministries; in music, art, and drama. They can help the poor and needy in practical ways. Most of all, women can encourage women in this complex and confused society.

Women understand women. We must teach them the Word so that they know God's standards in order to be equipped for ministry. Then we must encourage them to use their gifts to serve each other and the world around them. It is essential to have women teachers and role models for the generation following us. We must examine our beliefs and attitudes about women and be certain that they are biblical rather than traditional or cultural. Men and women need one another, and neither can serve the Lord effectively with an attitude of independence, superiority, or inferiority toward the other.

*In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. (1 Corinthians 11:11)*

The Scripture passages given in this chapter should encourage you as you develop your Women's Ministry. Not only are you doing a job that God commands you to do, but also you are doing a job He has equipped you for. He has given you the resources you need to accomplish His work. You have His indwelling Spirit, who has gifted you and will enable you. You have the acceptance and love of the Son of God demonstrated to you in the Scriptures. You will have other gifted women to work with you, sharing your vision and ministry. Knowing when you set out that it is clearly God's will to develop a ministry for women to women will give you stability, certainty, and confidence. You will be able to stand firm and press onward regardless of obstacles.

### *Qualified by the Blessing Their Ministry Brings to the Entire Church*

Jill Briscoe has well said about the need for women to have significant ministry, "When men of God recognize the gifts of women of God, and with their blessing and

under their authority, encourage their use, the church of God will be blessed.”

*Women*, both *single and married*, are blessed by a Women’s Ministry because it helps them to mature spiritually. This maturing will affect every part of their lives. They will grow in confidence because they will learn that their self-worth is not derived from any human being but from God. Women working outside the home will see their employment as ministry. Single women will learn that they have value and opportunities for ministry. God loves us, as women. He will be a Father and husband to us (Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 54:5). He will give us an eternal impact as we serve Him.

The *family* is blessed as women become better wives and mothers, content with their influential responsibility to raise the next generation. Many husbands will be encouraged by the example of their wives to become more committed to the Lord. Marriages are strengthened.

The *church* is blessed by the involvement of these gifted women. Their participation will supply many more volunteers for service in every area. The image of God is male and female. The body of Christ is male and female. Therefore, this image should be reflected wherever possible. Women should be on the church staff, the worship committee, the missions board, the building committee, the mercies committee, the discipline committee, and the Christian education committee; and they should be involved teaching Sunday school and club programs.

Let me share with you some comments I’ve received from those who serve on the Women’s Ministries Board of Northwest Bible Church about the benefits they have received from the women’s ministry:

- “I now have strong relationships with other women I may not have met otherwise.”
- “I feel so much more a part of our church.”
- “My walk with the Lord has been strengthened by the role models of more mature women.”
- “The opportunity to work with other women in a true team effort has been wonderful.”
- “I love being accountable to the other women on the board.”
- “I’ve developed skills in organization, leadership, and compromise.”
- “I love the creativity and the brainstorming.”
- “There is such a sense of family.”
- “I’ve learned different approaches to problems.”
- “My faith has been encouraged as I’ve seen God answer prayer.”
- “Personally, I have become much more confident in my gifts and abilities, and I feel a great sense of accomplishment in what God has enabled me to do.”

- “I have become more comfortable in speaking before a group. I’m more sensitive to reaching out to newcomers and relating to people in general.”
- “The fellowship among the board members and the sharing of our lives has strengthened my female identity and heightened my self-esteem and self-acceptance. I feel more comfortable about allowing my imperfections to show, to drop my mask, to make mistakes. The years have shown me in a practical way that I am important because I’m me, not just because of what I do.”

Wouldn’t you agree that this is an essential ministry for every church? Nothing else can accomplish what an effective ministry to women by women will do. Male leaders in the home and church should not think of themselves as prison wardens whose job it is to confine and repress women. Instead, enlightened church leadership, like a husband who lovingly leads his family, should provide an atmosphere like a greenhouse. There women can grow, blossom, and develop to their full potential with the blessing, provision, protection, and encouragement of the church leadership.

Each woman is unique—there is no one exactly like you or me in all the world. Each of us is influential in the sphere God has given to us in which to make an impact on our family, church, place of employment, and friends. For that reason, each of us is responsible and accountable to God for how we use the gifts and opportunities He has given us. Each of us will stand before Him individually as a woman.

This is the message I hope you will bring to the women of your church. When you can demonstrate from Scripture how God values them and they begin to serve Him with enthusiasm and growing freedom, there is no limit to what can happen as God works through them in your congregation.

*Questions for Study and Discussion*



1. Read Genesis 1:26–31. What do men and women share as persons created in the image of God?
2. Read Genesis 2:18–25; Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7; and Psalms 10:14; 33:20. From these passages, what do you learn about the word helper as used in Genesis 2:18, 20? Were any of these thoughts new to you?
3. Read Genesis 2:21–25. When was marriage instituted? What do you think is implied by the sentence “The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame”?
4. What aspects of redemption are shared by men and women?
5. Study the passages of Scripture that deal with some of the women discussed in this chapter who were used by God in the Old Testament. What were some of their leadership characteristics? Which characteristics would you ask God to develop in you?
6. What lessons from the life of Jesus impressed you regarding women in the Gospels?
7. What encourages you from the examples of women in the early church?
8. Pray that God will give you the names of two or three other women who would meet with you to pray about developing a Women’s Ministries Program in your church.