

WHEN WOMEN LEAD

A STUDY GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

START WITH THE WORD:

Memorize Galatians 3:28. For many, this is a core passage in support of women's leadership. Why?

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. This study is not just for women who lead. Can you discuss how it might be useful to both men and women who live and work with women in leadership positions?
2. How does talking about women's leadership advance the Kingdom of God?
3. The author shared her story of being called first into ministry and then into church planting. What is your "call" story? How does it differ from the author's? How is it similar?
4. Have you ever been frustrated by working on something at which you struggled to succeed? How did you deal with it?
5. Have you had the experience of learning and serving in a church led by a woman pastor? How did that experience affect you? Was it positive or negative? Were there ways in which you had to adjust your own worldview in order fully participate in that church community?
6. About what things are you "biblically indignant"?
7. As we begin this study together, what is your goal? Why are you personally taking time to do this study?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close your time of study, spend time reflecting on and praying over your goals (and over the goals of others, if you are taking this journey with a group).

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Read and discuss Suzanne Nicholson's "Ten Biblical Truths About Women In Leadership" in *Firebrand Magazine*: <https://firebrandmag.com/articles/10-scriptural-truths-about-women-in-leadership-firebrand-big-read>

CHAPTER ONE: THE THEOLOGICAL BARRIER

START WITH THE WORD:

Memorize Genesis 1:26-28. After reading this passage, do a Google search on two terms: complementarian and egalitarian. Discuss how this interpretation of the creation story supports a worldview that recognizes the ways in which men and women complement one another, while honoring God's design of partnership (not hierarchy).

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. Consider these statistics:
 - The increase in the number of women in ministry leadership has plateaued or decreased in the last 25 years.
 - Since 1998, the percentage of women pastors has risen less than one percentage point, according to a National Congregations Study.
 - Nationally, 11.4% of churches are led by women. Just over 5% of churches with an orthodox theology are led by women.
 - According to the 2013 Catalyst Census conducted by Fortune Magazine, there was no increase in the number of women in executive positions, with women holding less than fifteen percent of executive roles.

What does this information teach you?

2. Consider one more stat: "The larger the congregation, the less likely the parishioners are to approve of women leaders. Only 32 percent of those attending small churches (with fifty or less in attendance) disagree that some can lead, while 78 percent of those in churches of more than one thousand in attendance disagree with female leadership." What dynamics do you believe create this reality?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 14 (the whole chapter). How does reading verses 34-36 in context help you to understand these verses?
4. Read all of 1 Timothy 2. Again, how does reading this whole chapter help you understand the context of verse 12? And how does this verse (and the passage in 1 Corinthians 14) fit into the overall narrative of the Bible?
5. Which of the biblical and/or cultural findings shared in this chapter most encourages you? Which most confuses you?
6. Do you know women who are called and gifted to lead in ministry, and who are concerned about whether this call is biblically acceptable?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close your time of study, spend time journaling and thanking God for your life and his design. Write down all your thanksgivings, and save them for days when you question God's hand of blessing over your life.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Watch Sandra Richter's "Women in Ministry (The Biblical Case)":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoAyhSQtKR8>

CHAPTER TWO

THE PERCEPTION BARRIER

START WITH THE WORD:

Read Luke 7:36-40, then read (or re-read) the devotional word at the end of chapter two (pp. 39-41). After reading, write the following at the top of a journal page: “Do you see her?” Reflect personally on that question as the Holy Spirit leads.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. Look up Heidi Roizen’s case study (referenced in this chapter) and review it. Do you believe we all have subconscious biases? Do you believe you personally have subconscious biases? What other biases beyond gender might we hold without being consciously aware of them?
2. In which occupations is women’s leadership better accepted? In which occupations is female leadership more of a challenge — either for the woman or for those around her?
3. Discuss the three predicaments listed on p. 27. More generally, how do our opinions of others either free them up or hold them back from being all God has called them to be?
4. What are the implications of developing our theology based on the experience of people we know and love, compared with forming theology based on biblical principles (what the author calls “Kingdom up” vs. “Kingdom down”)?
5. How does the perception of others impact how you perceive yourself? Can you share a personal example?
6. How might optimism bias work against a woman in ministry leadership?
7. What is the strength of simply naming what is real (see p. 38)? What are the limits of doing so?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close your time of study, spend time prayer-journaling the details of your own giftedness. Journal also your confessions of areas where you hold a bias you may not fully acknowledge.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Watch this podcast with Sandra Richter and Preston Sprinkle (“A Raw Conversation About Women In Ministry: Dr. Sandra Richter”):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fK20SaGZ09k>

CHAPTER THREE

RESOURCES AND BENCHMARKS

START WITH THE WORD:

Read Luke 9:1-6. What do you learn from Jesus' commission about what is required in order to go where he sends? Read carefully as you list these requirements!

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. In the author's study of what happens when women lead, she outlines three foundational questions:
 - What tools and training can be placed into the hands of women called to the ministry of church leadership, so that those who hear that call have every resource at their disposal?
 - What solutions will best help women discover and own their unique leadership style?
 - What will shift the conversation from what is wrong with women in ministry leadership to what will release the massive leadership potential present in our gender?

How do you respond to these questions, given the potential limitation of resources?

2. On p. 44, the author lists a number of questions that must be addressed for leadership to be effective. Interact with these questions as you discuss the resource barrier.
3. Have you had a positive experience working with a coach? Whether you've had a negative experience or no experience, what do you think would make having a coach useful to you?
4. Do you serve in a church now, whether as a pastor, staff person or volunteer? Did you receive training? If you serve in any capacity, what training would be most useful so you can serve with excellence?
5. How do you respond to the notion that "God is not broke"? If you believe that, how does it change your approach to available resources? Be specific, considering your particular ministry setting.
6. How do the challenges of Christians in other parts of the world impact your appreciation for the resources available to you?
7. Memorize Luke 11:13. What does this verse teach you about God's definition of abundance?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close this time of study, pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the igniting of his gifts in your life. Journal the gifts that come to mind as you pray.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Watch Ben Witherington on Women in ministry ("Women and Their Roles in the New Testament"): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf2D8lWp-yA>

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PASTORAL CARE BARRIER

START WITH THE WORD:

Read the books of 1 John and 2 John. Memorize 1 John 2:5. What does love have to do with living out the call of God, according to John?

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. Many people characterize themselves as people pleasers, but we can't all be that. What about you? Are you a people pleaser and if so, what evidence can you give for that claim? If not, how did you manage to heal from this affliction?
2. How good—or bad—are you at saying no, and why?
3. Have you known a leader whose people-pleasing tendencies were obvious ... and perhaps not very helpful? What lessons might you learn from that experience?
4. On p. 68, the author lists a number of characteristics of those challenged with co-dependent tendencies. How did you interact with that list?
5. The nurturing quality of mothers is a beautiful thing. When is it a valuable gift, and when is it an unhealthy response to relationship?
6. Are there times when you have unrealistic expectations of pastoral care for your own pastor? What have you learned from this chapter that might make you a healthier member of the Body of Christ?
7. “To walk in love is to walk in obedience to God, to remember that he is God, and we are not” (p. 77). What does this statement teach you about obedience? About true love?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close this time of study, spend time journaling and in prayer, seeking healing for the ways you love others. As you pray, include specific ways you might show grace toward those around you who hold leadership positions.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Read the six-part series by Nijay Gupta, “Why I Believe in Women in Ministry”. The series begins here (you can advance to the next part at the end of each blog):

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/cruxsola/2019/05/why-i-believe-in-women-in-ministry-part-1-gupta/>

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BIOLOGICAL BARRIER

START WITH THE WORD:

Read Matthew 11:28-30. Memorize verse 28. What does this teach you about Jesus' desire for peace. What does it teach you about our created design?

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. "Women can have it all." Do you agree or disagree?
2. What has your generation asked of women? Or assumed of them? How have you responded to that ask?
3. Have you had an experience of belonging to a community of women who helped you navigate the challenges? What was that like? If you have not had that experience, what would be the characteristics of a fellowship you might value? Have you offered that support to another woman?
4. How might the church help in providing community and support for women in every season of life?
5. What gifts might singleness bring to adult women? If you are single, what challenges have you faced? What blessings have you found?
6. "Balance is a myth." How do you respond to that statement?
7. Read Matthew 11:28-30 as it is printed on p. 95 (The Message version). As you read, allow yourself to hear Jesus saying this directly to you. How do you receive this invitation?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you end this time of study, journal a prayer of gratitude to our God who offers us "unforced rhythms of grace." Write out a prayer specifically asking for the kind of supportive community you both seek and want to be for others.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Watch this podcast with Preston Sprinkle, Lynn Cohick and Amy Brown-Hughes ("Did Women Serve As Leaders In Early Christianity?"):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ExWz8veOGA>

INTERLUDE: SHEEP AMONG WOLVES (PART TWO)

Between the two sections of *When Women Lead*, you may want to take time to watch a documentary called *Sheep Among Wolves*. Look specifically for “Part Two” (created in 2019) as it is the most relevant video to our study. You can find it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_6xB8bMTg0

1. Discuss how women in Iran are quietly creating a spiritual revolution, according to this report.
2. In what specific ways are Iranian women leading the cause of Christ in their country?
3. What does this documentary teach you about how the Lord uses women in the service of the Kingdom?
4. How would you say you have been shaped as a leader?
5. How do you discern between the healthy fear that leads to humility and the fear that hinders your confidence in stepping into your calling?

CHAPTER SIX

IDENTITY

START WITH THE WORD:

Memorize Genesis 16:13. How are you helped by knowing this name of God?

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. Jim Collins (author of *Good to Great*) has written, “When what you are good at comes together with what you are passionate about, ‘not only does your work move toward greatness, but so does your life’” (p. 98). Can you name something in your own life that you are both good at and passionate about?
2. How do you relate (or respond) to the woman who said, “I am my biggest challenge. I need to get out of my own way” (p. 102). If her statement sounds familiar, in what ways has an identity deficit contributed to your feeling this way?
3. On pages 104-109, the author describes a journaling exercise around “I am” statements. If you have not already tried this exercise, try it now. If you have already started, take time now to add a few more “I am” statements to your journal. What have you learned about yourself through the “I am” exercise?
4. “What drives you—challenge or competence? Independence or dedication?” (p. 113) This question comes from the work of Dr. Edgar Schein, who developed a tool called “career anchors” to help folks define their own competencies, motives and values. Without having engaged in the exercise, what would you say are some of your more obvious competencies, motives and values? List them.
5. Sanctification is the art of discovering who we are designed to be. It is what happens when we allow holiness to invade our life. Can you do a word study of instances in the Bible where sanctification is taught? What do you learn from that study about the process of being sanctified?
6. In our current culture, a lot of attention is paid to “identity” and especially to the thought that our identity is something we control. How do you understand this term? Is identity something we create for ourselves, or something we discover within ourselves — a gift given by God?
7. How is the Holy Spirit active in the work of identity formation?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close this time of study, return to the name of God mentioned in this chapter — *El Roi*, “The God Who Sees Me”. Meditate on this name as you allow the Lord to speak to you about his design for your life. How does his “seeing” bring comfort or assurance? How does it challenge you?

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Bridgetown Church (Portland, Oregon) produced four video teachings detailing the study they did on women in ministry leadership (“Women in Eldership: What is Our Position?”). Bridgetown is not a specifically Wesleyan or Methodist community of faith, so they may differ in some of their conversation about church organization. However, their study is exceptional.

Watch Part One: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKetqpnVI24>

CHAPTER SEVEN

AUTHORITY

START WITH THE WORD:

If you have an hour, read the whole story of Esther (a short book in the Old Testament). If you don't have time to read the whole book, read chapter four with special attention to verses 13-14. What does that phrase, "for such a time as this," mean to you? If you have had a "for such a time as this" moment in your life, share that story.

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. "Lord, make me ____." How would you finish this sentence for yourself?

The next three questions are taken directly from page 126 of When Women Lead:

2. What are your interests? What draws you to those interests? How have people in your life reacted to your interests?
3. Who are the people with whom you can be your truest self?
4. What are you passionate about? How do the things you are passionate about shape who you are?
5. Has anyone ever spoken prophetically over you? Have you ever spoken prophetically over someone else? Describe that experience.
6. What would you say is the difference between a prophetic voice, and a strong opinion about someone or something?
7. What is the difference between taking spiritual authority and wielding power as a leader?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close this time of study, return to that statement: "Lord, make me ____." Spend time in listening prayer, seeking the Lord for how he might complete that sentence for you. Journal what you hear.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL:

Watch part two of Bridgetown's lecture series on women in ministry leadership ("Women and Eldership: What does this mean for me?"):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08RcatbWyxE>

CHAPTER EIGHT

EQUIPPING

START WITH THE WORD:

Read all of Judges, chapter 5 – the Song of Deborah. What does this song teach us about the character of the prophetess Deborah? Do you think you would have liked her if you had known her?

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. What has been your experience of professional coaching? What gifts do you possess that would be improved by more training or coaching?
2. Have you ever had to negotiate the terms of an agreement related to your work? What was that like?
3. How is getting rightly equipped for ministry related to the call to “take authority”?
4. “Learn to tell the story of this ministry to which you’re called, and learn to share your vision at the drop of a hat, because those are the things to which people give” (p. 143). What is your ministry story? Can you share it in five minutes or less? What is your vision?
5. What is your relationship with money? Does the idea of raising funds intimidate you? Energize you?
6. What tools or processes have helped you in identifying your skill set, gifts and call?
7. What area of your life might be encouraged by Deborah’s encouragement: “March on, my soul; be strong!”

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY: As you close this time of study, pray and ask the Lord to increase your hunger for “the listening side of prayer and for prophetic wisdom” (p. 155).

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: Watch part three of Bridgetown’s lecture series on women in ministry leadership (“Women and Eldership: A Closer Look at the Four Pillars”): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-VGy7Q4aYk>

CHAPTER NINE

PARTNERSHIP

START WITH THE WORD:

Read Acts 9:36-43. How does Tabitha's resurrection story encourage you today?

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. Borrowing from a heading within this chapter – “Coaching, Mentoring or Training: What Do I Need Most?” –how would you answer that question? How would you defend your answer in light of what you've learned as you read chapter nine?
2. A big part of this chapter is about developing productive partnerships between men and women for the sake of the Kingdom. This brings us back to our conversation in chapter one about our created design according to the creation story in Genesis 1. What theological lines can you draw between these two chapters, now that we are talking about how to live out our theology in practical ways?
3. “Have you learned the differences in leadership styles between men and women, and are you able to appreciate and support those differences?” (p. 175) How would you characterize those differences using positive and constructive terms?
4. Had you heard of the “Billy Graham Rule” before reading this chapter? What is your opinion of it? Necessary? Not necessary? What do holiness and health look like when interacting with someone of another gender?
5. Who have been some of your “door openers” – men or women who helped you move forward in your work, relationships or faith?
6. Do you have gender-related brokenness in your own life that may need spiritual attention and healing? Who might you reach out to in order to begin that process in a way that seems safe and appropriate?
7. Does your church offer or encourage inter-generational mentoring (older adults mentoring younger adults)? If so, what does that ministry look like? If not, what could it look like?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY: As you close this time of study, seek the Lord for one or two women younger than you that you might begin praying for and encouraging in some small way.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: Watch part four of Bridgetown's lecture series on women in ministry leadership (“Women and Eldership: Threats and Invitations”): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU5jMdSIPxg>

CHAPTER TEN

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

START WITH THE WORD:

Read Romans 16, circling all the names of women who are mentioned there. How does this chapter support the argument that the Bible does indeed make space for women to lead in advancing the gospel?

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. “What if the kingdom of God is straining toward the day when all God’s people are deployed in the work of the Great Commission?” (p. 179)
What are the signs that this may indeed be the case?
2. In Suraya’s story, we learned what happens when a woman who feels inadequate discovers her worth in Jesus. What was it like for you to discover this truth? How has your life been impacted by the assurance that you are loved and valued by God?
3. Through the study of what happens when women lead, the author was inspired to pray a simple prayer, “Lord, in this work of figuring out what is mine to do, help me to see what you see.” What insights does this prayer inspire in you?
4. How does Paul’s story of introducing the gospel to women in Philippi, even inviting them to participate in advancing it, help you to better understand the apostle Paul as an advocate and partner of women in spreading the gospel message?
5. “There have been times when everyone knew God did not want women to lead in the church. Could there be a time when everyone knows the opposite is true?” (Felicity Dale, p. 186) In your opinion what needs to happen in order for this vision to be the church’s reality?
6. What challenges are women who lead up against? What opportunities are they given?
7. One last “what if” question: “What if all God’s people who are equipped for the work are called to humbly proclaim Jesus to a lost and hurting world?” (p. 191) Let’s dream for a moment: How would the world change if everyone began to live out of God’s call on their life?

TAKE TIME TO JOURNAL AND PRAY:

As you close this time of study, you are invited to read Psalm 139 slowly and meditatively. What do you notice about God as you listen to this being read? What do you notice about yourself? What new thoughts are inspired in you? What hungers are stoked? What prayer are you left with?

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: Watch this short clip of N.T. Wright (“Why Women Should be Church Leaders and Preachers”):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=os8M9In2cM0>

... and if you have time, listen to this delightful podcast with Amy and Rob Dixon, authors of *Penny Preaches*, a children’s book about women preachers:

<https://artofholiness.com/amy-and-rob-dixon/>

ALL LINKS

Suzanne Nicholson's - "Ten Biblical Truths About Women In Leadership"

<https://firebrandmag.com/articles/10-scriptural-truths-about-women-in-leadership-firebrand-big-read>

Sandra Richter - "Women in Ministry (The Biblical Case)"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoAyhSQtKR8>

Ben Witherington - "Women and Their Roles in the New Testament"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mf2D8IWp-yA>

Nijay Gupta - "Why I Believe in Women in Ministry"

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/cruxsola/2019/05/why-i-believe-in-women-in-ministry-part-1-gupta/>

Preston Sprinkle, Lynn Cohick, Amy Brown-Hughes -

"Did Women Serve As Leaders In Early Christianity?"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ExWz8veOGA>

Sheep Among Wolves (Part Two)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_6xB8bMTg0

Bridgetown Church - "Women in Eldership: What is Our Position?"

Part One: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKetqpnVI24>

Part Two: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08RcatbWyxE>

Part Three: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-VGy7Q4aYk>

Part Four: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU5jMdSIPxg>

N.T. Wright - "Why Women Should be Church Leaders and Preachers"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=os8M9ln2cM0>

Art of Holiness podcast - Amy and Rob Dixon, authors of *Penny Preaches*

<https://artofholiness.com/amy-and-rob-dixon/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more relevant articles and podcasts connected to the author:

<https://artofholiness.com/?s=women>

Craig Keener - "Women in Ministry"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyZr-K3STsU>

Craig Keener - "Was Paul For Or Against Women In Ministry?"

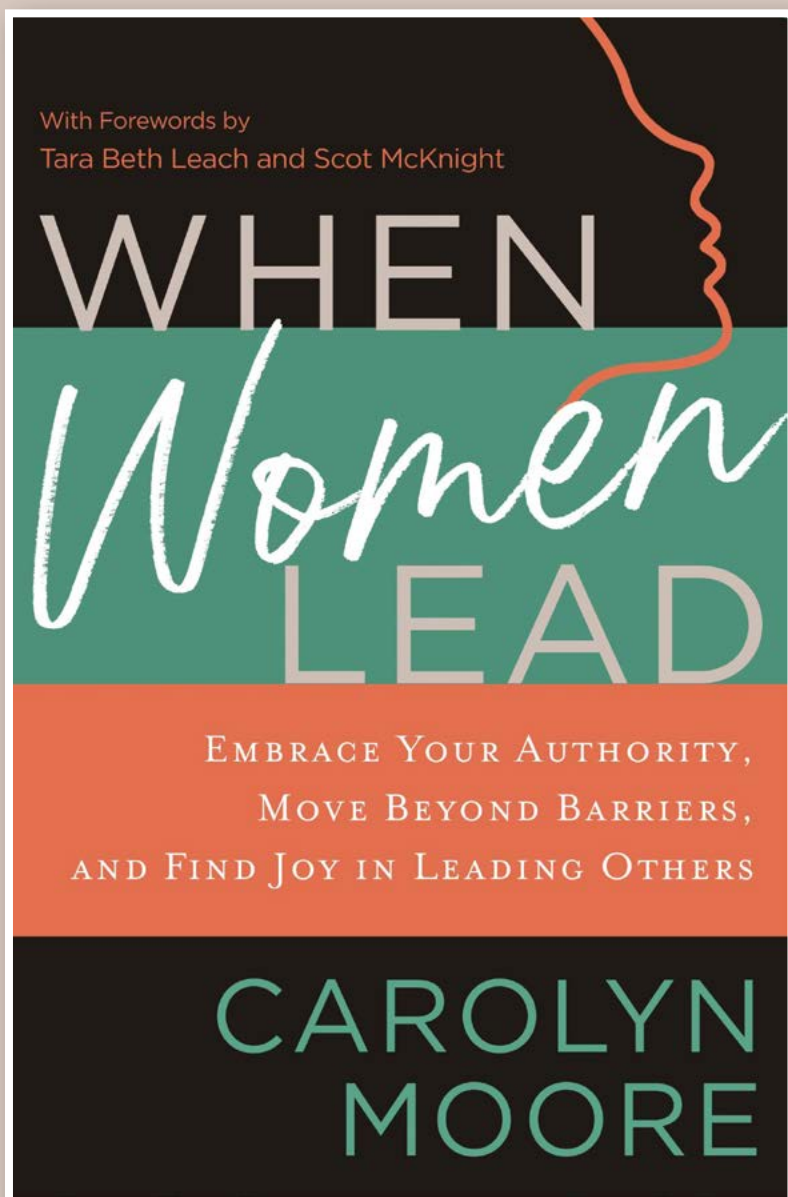
https://craigkeener.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/EJ_2001_02_Spring_Keener-1.pdf

Ben Witherington - Seven-Minute Seminary: "Women In Ministry, Part One"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2M6HswlH3A>

Ben Witherington - Seven-Minute Seminary: "Women In Ministry, Part Two"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5VQe_nuNjg



PERFECT FOR:

- All women looking to learn more on how to be a leader in all areas of their life.
- Men looking to partner better with, and empower the women in their life
- Groups that want to learn together and discuss what it looks like to have women lead in their church and communities.

IN THESE PAGES YOU WILL:

- Engage with Carolyn and her first hand stories
- Learn ways to practically become a better leader
- Be inspired to grow as a leader in your communities

When Women Lead is designed to help men and women better understand the unique leadership challenges of women leaders, and to help women design strategies so they can flourish in life and work. We can help women who lead to hold more realistic expectations and employ more effective strategies by giving them solid data and proven strategies to move beyond survival so they find joy in leading others.

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