

**WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?**  
UNDERSTANDING AND OVERCOMING THE EFFECTS  
OF GENDER BIAS IN THE CHURCH

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## **ABSTRACT**

The path to top leadership positions for women in all industries has always been filled with inherent barriers and overt obstacles. The most recent statistic from the Assemblies of God claims that less than fifteen percent of credentialed women serve in lead pastoral positions. From 2007-2017 the percentage of women serving in those lead roles fell from 25 percent to 19 percent. For a Fellowship that strongly supports an egalitarian view of women in ministry, these statistics seem contradictory. If the official position of the Assemblies of God claims women are equal in creation and in call, why aren't there more women in pastoral leadership?

After interviewing credentialed men and women within the Assemblies of God and researching common barriers women face in the workplace, the most reasonable explanation behind the lack of women in pastoral ministry within an egalitarian context is unconscious gender bias. The reason why women are missing from our platforms and pulpits is not rooted in sexism or prejudice, but in unconscious preference.

In order to better back the position of the Assemblies of God to support women equally in their call to minister, the effects of unconscious gender bias must be addressed and challenged. In order to do that, women who are called to ministry need to be given the same opportunities as men to be hired, mentored, sponsored, and to be seen as leaders. To level the playing field for women in ministry, churches must strategically and intentionally challenge and change biased practices and policies. These changes in practice will produce a re-alignment with our position and will create an easier path to the top for women who are called to lead. For the sake of advancing the Kingdom, we must ask and actively address the question, "Where are the women?"

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## WHERE ARE THE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP?

When the Assemblies of God was first founded, women were at the epicenter of its creation. Early female Pentecostal pioneers like Maria B. Woodworth-Etter, Marie Burgess Brown, and Alice Reynolds Flower freely served as ministers and missionaries, educators and evangelists.<sup>1</sup> In these days, women were equally equipped and empowered to go “into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).<sup>2</sup> Women served in all capacities within the Church and the Pentecostal movement flourished. However, due to cultural expectations, institutional concerns, and increasing debate over the proper role of women in ministry, a dramatic drop in female leadership occurred in the early 1920s.<sup>3</sup> Since then, the Assemblies of God has struggled to gain back the ground that was lost for women in ministry leadership.

Though many notable leaders within the evangelical community have written on this topic and have advocated for a more equal partnership of men and women, there is still a sizable gap between the number of men in pastoral roles and women in pastoral roles. While it is difficult to measure the exact number of men versus women in ministry, the most recent statistic from the Assemblies of God claims that women make up 19 percent of all lead pastors, 23 percent of all sectional presbyters, and 25 percent of all credential holders.<sup>4</sup> Based on these statistics, the gap between women and men in pastoral leadership roles is painfully evident. When women make up less than 20 percent of lead pastors and a mere quarter of all credential holders, clearly there is much work to be done for the advancement of women in pastoral ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Role of Women in Ministry,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> All biblical citations unless otherwise noted are from the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>3</sup> “The Role of Women in Ministry,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> “2017 Summary Statistical Report,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

### Position Versus Practice

The Assemblies of God position paper on the role of women in ministry argues that in order to take back the ground, we must revisit the Scriptures and rise above cultural practices that exclude women from leadership positions. However, this is not as simple as it sounds and in many ways, is not a holistic solution to the problem at hand. Within this denomination specifically the majority of members fully believe and support the role of women in ministry, yet there have been no significant changes in the number of women in senior ministry leadership. Since the adopting of the official position paper in 2010, there has actually been a steady decrease in the percentage of women in lead pastoral roles. In fact, in the ten year span from 2007 to 2017, the percentage of women in lead pastoral positions dropped from 25 percent (2007)<sup>5</sup> to 19 percent (2017).<sup>6</sup> Though every year the number of women in these positions rose (with the exception of 2013),<sup>7</sup> they did not rise enough to keep up with the yearly influx of lead pastors due to new churches or church plants.

It seems too simplistic then to argue that all we must do is to study the Scriptures better and adjust our cultural practices. In the past century, American culture has been steadily changing to create more space at the table for women to lead. Since the 1920s, women in America have seen advances in their fight for equality. In 1920 women attained the right to vote,<sup>8</sup> in 1975 they gained the ability to serve on juries,<sup>9</sup> and in 1978 laws were created to protect women from being fired from their jobs for being pregnant.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “2007 Summary Statistical Report,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> “2017 Summary Statistical Report,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> “2013 Summary Statistical Report,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Const. amend. XIX.

<sup>9</sup> *Taylor v. Louisiana*, 419 U.S. 522 (1975).

<sup>10</sup> Pub. L. No. 95-555, 92 Stat. 2076 (1978).

In the past decade specifically, women have seen slow but steady growth in their endeavors to lead in the business world as well. In 2007 only two percent of *Fortune* 500 CEOs were women.<sup>11</sup> In 2018, women made up five percent of the same list, with 24 females serving in these coveted CEO positions. (This number dropped from 32 to 24 from 2017-2018.)<sup>12</sup> While the percentage of women in these positions has been trending upward, the business and political world faces the same challenge as the Church world. Despite this upward trend, women still only hold 25 percent of senior executive positions, 19 percent of board seats, and they make up a marginal 23 percent of elected congressional officials.<sup>13</sup> Across the board, whether in business or in the Church, women typically hold less than a quarter of top leadership roles. The percentages are painfully consistent. Though women comprise 50.8 percent of the American population,<sup>14</sup> 57 percent of undergraduate degree holders, and 60 percent of master's degree graduates,<sup>15</sup> the women are missing from the leadership world.

The glass ceiling that once prevented women from rising to corporate, or typically male-dominated positions, shattered long ago. But as it shattered, a new problem was created. People assumed that everything was fixed. People believed the lie that women were finally seen as equal and the war was over. However, the war was just beginning. The obstacles that women faced did become more surmountable, at least by some women some of the time. Paths to the top became accessible, but only a few women would find

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<sup>11</sup> "50 Most Powerful Women in Business," *Fortune*. Accessed November 3, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> "The Share of Female CEOs in the Fortune 500 Dropped by 25% in 2018," *Fortune*. Accessed January 2, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> "A Record Number of Women Will be Serving in the New Congress," *Pew Research*, Accessed February 1, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> "U.S. Population Data," *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*. Accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> "Education Statistics 2015-2016," *National Center for Education Statistics*. Accessed December 2, 2018.

them.<sup>16</sup> Women like Margaret Thatcher, Condoleezza Rice, Melinda Gates, Joyce Meyer, and Jeanne Mayo, proved to the world that women could lead and they could lead well. As women rose to power, society became less concerned with continuing to advance women's leadership opportunities. We naturally believed the problem was fixed and that all women, if called or qualified, could aspire to such positions. We stopped paying attention to the percentages and happily cheered for equality when a woman would fill a leadership position. A systematic study of the S&P 1500 Firms over the past two decades confirms there is an implicit quota on the women allowed in top management. When one woman breaks the perceived glass ceiling, the odds of another woman making the same top management team go down by 50 percent.<sup>17</sup> Not only that, but that same study found that if two women are serving on a board, it is highly unlikely a third woman will be added or asked to join.<sup>18</sup> Now instead of "token" women in leadership positions, we have "two-kens."<sup>19</sup>

It is that perceived winning of the battle for equality and the "two-ken" levels of perceived diversity that have caused the women's revolution to come to a standstill. Why do few people care or notice that few women serve as CEOs or lead pastors? Despite all the progress that has been made, we have simply stopped paying attention. Because no women used to hold top positions, we feel like seeing one or two in a top position is equality, when it could not be further from reality. In a world where female Millennials are raised to believe they can become CEOs, presidents, or pastors, we must face the reality that belief in equality is simply not enough. As future leaders are entering our

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<sup>16</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Linda Carli, *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2007), 6.

<sup>17</sup> Adam Grant, *Power Moves: Lessons from Davos* (Audible Studios, 2019), Audible Audiobook.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



universities and sitting in the pews of our churches, what kind of messages are being explicitly and implicitly communicated to them?

The Assemblies of God position paper may have officially opened the door for women, but the door being open is irrelevant if few women are being actively encouraged to walk through it, or better yet, if few women are choosing to walk through it. This is where the disconnect occurs. Simply opening the door and developing dialogue about the theology or theory of women in ministry is not enough to close the gap. Over the past decade as the Church has promoted more discussion on this topic than ever before, a steady decrease and even a disinterest was seen in women pursuing pastoral positions. As a denomination and as the Church, we have disconnected ourselves from the hard work surrounding this issue and have settled for debate and dialogue. We look at the statistics and settle for women making up a quarter of our active members. We have unknowingly disconnected what we preach and what we practice. In order to change, we have to change what we practice and how we practice. We must change how we think about the current statistics, about how we choose and develop leaders, and how we understand the challenges that women face on a daily basis. It's not enough to talk about it, though education and awareness are important. To fully open the door for women in ministry, we must accurately and intentionally align what we practice with our belief in our position.

Jesus provides the greatest example of what this alignment looks like. Every time he interacted with a woman, he communicated her value and elevated her societal position. In John 8:1-11, when the woman is caught in the adultery and put on trial without her male counterpart, Jesus calls out the unjust system and extends grace to her. He draws in the dust and shields her from a society that was biased against her. When the

woman with the issue of blood touches him, though culture dictated she should have been punished for doing so, Jesus calls her “daughter,” and extends to her the privileges of being in his family (Luke 8:43-48). When Jesus heals the woman who was permanently bent over, he publically calls her the “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:16), which is the first time anyone in the Bible is called something other than the son of Abraham.<sup>20</sup> Mary sat at the feet of Jesus learning as a rabbinical pupil would. When Martha tries to remind her of her proper place, Jesus defends her right to learn (Luke 10:39-42). But Mary wasn’t the only woman who was given discipleship status. Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, Susanna, and many others traveled with him and financially supported his ministry (Luke 8:2-3). Finally, when Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well, he not only breaks cultural norms and speaks to her, but he engages her in a serious theological discussion and reveals to her that he is the Messiah. This interaction empowers her to become a witness to her entire town and many people came to faith in Jesus because of her testimony (John 4:1-42). If we read the Scriptures quickly and not carefully, we easily miss the beauty and the significance of these moments. Jesus used his language, his position, and his actions to publically and privately communicate the value of women, to engage them, to elevate their status, and to empower them to reach their respective communities. Though cultural challenges still existed for them, Jesus did everything in his power to reveal to the world then and now that God’s Kingdom had come and that in it, all people whether male or female, Jew or Gentile, slave for free could participate (Gal. 3:28).

As we revisit the Scriptures as the Assemblies of God position paper advocates, one thing becomes clear. God’s heart is for every individual, young or old, male or

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<sup>20</sup> Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2013), 45.

female; to use the gifts He has given them to “go into all the world” (Mark 16:15). As we look at current statistics and trends both in the secular world and the Church world, it is painfully evident that we are not doing our best. If half of God’s people are being excluded, whether consciously or unconsciously, from the roles they were born to play, something is wrong. The women of the world are longing to be heard, to be seen, and to be given a chance. Based on the Scriptures and current evidence of the inequality that women encounter there is no better time for the Church to rise up and ask, where are the women? It is time for the Church to genuinely seek to listen and to align itself once more with the heart of God to see all people be equipped and empowered for ministry

### **Understanding the Barriers**

Following Jesus’ example, the Church must understand and directly attack the barriers that prevent women from rising into leadership positions. This allows the position we hold to be validated by the practices we allow and create. Outside of bad theology or a misunderstanding of the role of women in ministry, there are a plethora of explicit and implicit barriers that prevent women from leading at their highest potential. For the sake of this argument, it is assumed that within the Assemblies of God leadership, there are very few who misunderstand or misinterpret the Scriptures about women in ministry. Because of the clarity of the “Role of Women in Ministry”<sup>21</sup> position paper and the excellent leadership within this denomination, the absolute barrier of blatant sexism or exclusion will not be examined within the parameters of this paper. Though this is still an issue for many churches and for many people in throughout the world, the Assemblies of God clearly articulates its beliefs on this issue and anyone not adhering to those beliefs

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<sup>21</sup> “The Role of Women in Ministry,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 1, 2019.

is in the minority. Every Assemblies of God male pastor who was interviewed fully supports and believes in women serving in all capacities within the church.<sup>22</sup> This affirms the belief that education and consistent teaching on the proper role of women in ministry is still crucial and vital, but a lack of education is most likely not the root cause of the gender gap in the Church. Every leader and church should be encouraged to evaluate their particular congregation and cultural setting and respond accordingly. If a focus on the proper teaching of women is needed, by all means it should be pursued. But to change the landscape for women in ministry, we need more than a sermon. We must find better ways to “fix the gap between our practice and our theology”<sup>23</sup> and it starts with listening to the women.

The dozens of women who were interviewed for this research spoke honestly and candidly about the barriers that have held them back in ministry. These women are all credentialed within the Assemblies of God and serve in various roles within the Church. Their job titles include, but are not limited to pastors, counselors, missionaries, administrative assistants, educators, Assemblies of God district directors and ministry heads. After reviewing the data collected from these interviews, along with all the additional research for this thesis, five prominent barriers were established: visibility, mentoring, lack of job opportunities, work-life balance, and both conscious and unconscious gender bias. By acknowledging and addressing these barriers, the Church has a chance to develop a healthy marriage of what we say and do; our position and our practice.

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<sup>22</sup> Male Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>23</sup> Donna Barrett, Interviewed by author, Missouri, November 17, 2018.

## *Visibility*

The first barrier is visibility. Almost 100 percent of the women interviewed agreed that most women do not aspire to top leadership positions within the church because they have rarely, if ever, seen a woman hold those positions.<sup>24</sup> Because they have not seen women lead at high levels, they do not view it as an option for themselves.<sup>25</sup> Though there are many “first women” to hold leadership positions, that does not mean any woman can or that the general public views women in top tier leadership as common or normal.<sup>26</sup> The women who make it to the top are the exception, not the standard. This corresponds with the previously mentioned S&P 1500 Firms research. When a woman reaches top tier leadership, it decreases the chances of another woman reaching that same level by 50 percent. The responsibility for that decrease lies both in those who are hiring and those who are applying. Many women agree that churches are more reluctant to hire women from outside their organizations, especially women who are single.<sup>27</sup> This prevents many women from applying in the first place—they are aware of how difficult and lonely the road to the top is. Research indicates women are also less likely to apply for jobs in the first place because they believe they have to meet 100 percent of the job criteria listed (men apply if they think they meet 60 percent).<sup>28</sup> Until we see more women in leadership positions, women will continue to believe that it is unachievable and will not seek out those positions on their own. But in order to receive those positions in the first place, they must wrestle with the second barrier.

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<sup>24</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>25</sup> Donna Barrett, Interviewed by author, Missouri, November 17, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Linda Carli, *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2007), 13

<sup>27</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>28</sup> Georges Desvaux, Sandrine Devillard-Hoellinger, and Mary C. Meany, “A Business Case for Women,” *The McKinsey Quarterly* (September 2008): 4. Accessed November 5, 2018.

## ***Mentoring***

The second barrier is limited or zero opportunities for mentorship. It's no surprise that in the business world and the Church world, mentoring provides a significant advantage for a person trying to build their resume. When upper level leaders champion and support those beneath them, it helps them to build the necessary skills, connections, and confidence to secure a job or a promotion. Unfortunately for women, men have an easier time obtaining and sustaining these valuable mentoring relationships.<sup>29</sup> Recent studies indicate that men are considerably more likely than women to be mentored and to be satisfied with the rate of their career advancement.<sup>30</sup> Many women feel that men are unwilling to mentor them because it requires "extra work."<sup>31</sup> Agreeing to mentor a woman means dealing with different boundaries than mentoring a man. Most of the time this means there are fewer trips to the golf course and a little more planning involved. But while mentoring women may take a few extra steps, it is crucial for their advancement. (Chapter 3 will provide suggestions for resolving this issue.) Without these opportunities to learn and receive sponsorship, women often fail to rise through the ranks. Support from men in general was one of the biggest needs mentioned by women in ministry.<sup>32</sup> Women want to know that the people who are currently in leadership both believe in them and will actively support and promote them. This lack of mentorship directly correlates with the third barrier, lack of job opportunities.

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<sup>29</sup> Kimberly E. O'Brien et al. "A Meta-Analytic Investigation of Gender Differences in Mentoring," *Journal of Management* 36 (2010): 539-40.

<sup>30</sup> Sheryl Sandberg and Nell Scovell, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 67.

<sup>31</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

### ***Lack of Job Opportunities***

One of the biggest complaints from women in ministry is that there is a clear lack of opportunities for them to step into paid ministry positions. There are plenty of opportunities for women to volunteer or to be part of a “package deal”<sup>33</sup> with their spouse, but very few churches seem to be hiring women. Many women who do have leadership roles within the Church often work other jobs for income or healthcare benefits.<sup>34</sup> As one woman shared, “the church expects me to work for free.”<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately in many ways, the door still remains firmly shut for women seeking paid pastoral positions because congregations and leaders are reluctant to consider changing their policies and practices, even if it may be for the better.

Some of this reluctance stems from the same reason why men refuse to mentor women. It requires implementing new boundaries, dealing with new territory, and a major change to the landscape of office/ministry life. It also stems from a tight grip on traditional gender roles within the church. People are comfortable paying men to pastor and don’t understand why women want to be paid for their work, even women who are qualified. Women are encouraged to serve, but not for pay unless they want to be in Children’s Ministry or on the mission field.<sup>36</sup> Both consciously and unconsciously, the Church has not done enough to open the door wide enough for women to fit through. As a result, the lack of women in paid pastoral positions has grown and the gap between men and women in ministry has widened even farther over the past decade.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>34</sup> Stacy Morse, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 9, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Kristi Singer, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 6, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>37</sup> “2007-2017 Summary Statistical Report,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

### ***Work-Life Balance***

Another barrier for women who seek to be in paid pastoral ministry is balancing the responsibility of caring for their family and ministry responsibilities. (Even for women who are not paid to be in ministry this is a significant challenge.) The weight of parenthood is heavy and research indicates that women who work full-time, still bear the brunt of the workload at home. Though housework is shared more equally now between partners, men typically spend 1.25 hours per day on household activities and women spend 2.15 hours.<sup>38</sup> Even women in top leadership positions still perform more childcare than their male counterparts.<sup>39</sup> It is no different for women in ministry. The pressure to be a wife and mother often forces many women to resign their positions or to not apply for positions in the first place.<sup>40</sup> Lack of childcare options, inflexible work schedules, little to no maternity leave options, and an overall lack of encouragement are the main reasons why women in ministry struggle to balance the pressure of home and ministry.<sup>41</sup> In every industry women deal with the frustration of working in a male-dominated world that has not adjusted to meet their needs. Women are expected to work full-time and to care for their families full-time, which for most women feels like an impossible task. Women who have a call to ministry find themselves in a position where they are forced to choose and when the church provides little or no support for them to pursue their calling while being a good wife or mother, they typically view choosing their family as the only option. Being a stay-at-home caregiver for a season or for a lifetime is a noble and worthy

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<sup>38</sup> “American Time Use Survey,” *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*. Accessed January 25, 2019.

<sup>39</sup> Sheryl Sandberg and Nell Scovell, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 51.

<sup>40</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



occupation. But when women who are called to ministry are forced into that position or excluded from ministry opportunities because of it, it becomes an insurmountable barrier.

### ***Gender Bias***

The final and most difficult barrier women face is gender bias. As one woman said, “The obstacle I am still trying to overcome is that men in ministry don't know they are uncomfortable with the idea of women in ministry. They are good-hearted people who are unsure how to navigate new territory. They are used to guys-only and are unsure of what anything else looks like.”<sup>42</sup> The handful of male credential holders who were interviewed as part of this research agreed that two of the biggest barriers are “tradition” and “prejudice.”<sup>43</sup> They also agreed that as a whole, men want to see women excel in their callings, but they often do not consider the barriers preventing them from doing so.<sup>44</sup> Because men in leadership (who are truly good-hearted, godly people) do not consider these barriers or what they personally could do to help women, women remain stuck in traditional roles and the percentages of women in leadership positions across the board remain stagnant. While gender bias can be something that people are conscious of, most people are not aware how society, tradition, and stereotypes have shaped their view of how women and men should conduct themselves professionally. The next chapter will explore this topic and examine how it affects women in the workplace, especially women in ministry.

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<sup>42</sup> Jada Morgan, Interviewed by author, Tennessee, December 12, 2018. .

<sup>43</sup> Cameron Combs, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 29, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> Male Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

## UNDERSTANDING UNCONCIOUS BIAS

In order to best understand the role that unconscious bias plays in stalling or preventing the advancement of women in the workplace, especially women in ministry positions, three key elements must be examined. First, what bias is not. It's very easy to confuse bias with sexism or to think that certain people are exempt from experiencing it. By examining what bias is not, clear parameters can be set for this discussion. Second, what bias actually is and how it affects women seeking ministry employment. Third and finally, examples of how bias presents itself in the forms of men versus women, women versus women, the Church versus women, and the internal battle women face against themselves. Though no person can escape bias, the negative effects of bias can be overcome through education, personal evaluation, deliberate practical steps, and the help of the Holy Spirit.

### What Bias Is Not

The word bias often invokes feelings of general negativity. However, bias is a natural, normal part of how every person sees the world. In order to get past the negative connotation of this word, let's examine what gender bias is not. First, bias is not sexism.<sup>45</sup> Sexism is a blatant prejudice against someone because of his or her gender. Sexism is rooted in a conscious awareness that one gender is lesser than the other. Individuals who are sexist will openly make comments or decisions that reflect their held beliefs. One female pastor remembers being told by a board member that he did not believe in women being pastors and that he would not support her leadership.<sup>46</sup> As a youth pastor, I was

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<sup>45</sup> Kristen Pressner, "Are you Biased? I am," TedxBasel, August 30, 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Mackenzie Witzki, interviewed by author, Kansas, November 11, 2018.

once told by a parent that their child could no longer attend the youth group I led because they felt it was unbiblical for the church to give a woman the title of pastor. These types of remarks are plainly stated and rooted in the belief that women should not pastor at all or that they have other responsibilities, like motherhood, that exclude them from leadership. Sexism has no place in the body of Christ and stands in direct opposition to the heart of God (Gal. 3:28). Sexism is also not what this thesis asserts is the main cause of the gap between men and women in ministry. Though it can definitely play its part and wreak havoc on any church or organization, the Assemblies of God stands firmly on its position that men and women are equal in creation and call.<sup>47</sup> Because of this strong stance, many women also agree that sexism is not the culprit behind their lack of advancement in ministry.<sup>48</sup>

Because most women agree that sexism is not the cause for their lack of opportunities for mentorship or advancement, bias becomes the best option for understanding what causes the gap between men and women in ministry. If sexism is prejudice against someone working in a leadership role based on their gender; bias is best understood as a preference for men or women to fill certain leadership roles. Bias is not inherently cruel or intentionally sinful in nature. This leads to the second thing that must be understood about bias. Bias is not something that can be outrun or outsmarted without intentional effort and ongoing personal evaluation.<sup>49</sup> The most well-intentioned people claim they do not “see” race or gender or age when evaluating candidates for leadership positions, but no person is exempt from bias. To be biased is to be human. Studies show

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<sup>47</sup> “The Role of Women in Ministry,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>48</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>49</sup> Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2013), 147.

that when a person cannot admit they might be biased, it actually prevents them from effectively confronting and dealing with their biases.<sup>50</sup> But when leaders humble themselves and examine their personal biases, then the real work of wrestling with unconscious gender bias begins.

### **What Bias Is**

Every minute of every day, the human brain looks for patterns. The brain then sorts what it sees into important categories: into the familiar and unfamiliar, into what is comfortable and what is not. These shortcuts are good and allow us to function and react quickly to daily life decisions. Shortcuts are what allow us to open a door or operate a car without consciously thinking through every step that is required. But shortcuts also determine what we unconsciously accept as normal and how we stereotype those around us. Though the word stereotype has a negative connotation, stereotyping can be simply understood as how we try to relate to others based on our past experiences with similar people or situations.<sup>51</sup> When the brain encounters something that it commonly does not see, like women in pastoral leadership positions, it throws up a red flag—not because it inherently disagrees with what it is seeing, but because it doesn’t know how to process this new information. In essence, what we see is what we know. What we know is what we are comfortable with. What we are comfortable with is what we accept as reality. This is how unconscious biases are formed.

A recent study found that 75 percent of people (including women) think, “men” when they see career related words such as business, profession, and work. But think,

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<sup>50</sup> Kristen Pressner, “Are you Biased? I am,” TedxBasel, August 30, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Alice H. Eagly and Linda Carli, *Through the Labyrinth: The Truth About How Women Become Leaders* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2007), 84.

“women” when they hear family related words like home or household.<sup>52</sup> For so long these words have been traditionally male or female, so the unconscious association is natural. We naturally associate men with words like math, science, surgeon, boss, CEO, or director. Women are more naturally associated with words like nurse, caregiver, teacher, assistant, attendant, or secretary.<sup>53</sup> These mental associations are not good or bad, but they can create problems for people who seek to live outside the bounds of their given gender stereotype.

### ***How Bias Effects Women in Leadership***

The problem with bias is not that the human brain naturally associates certain words with gender, but that because of those associations, people have developed strong preferences for men in leadership roles. Because these preferences are deeply entrenched in the brain, they are very difficult to consciously combat, which leads to qualified women being locked out of the leadership world. No study proves this better than the Harvard Business School case study on real-life entrepreneur, Heidi Roizen. Over the past decade, professors at numerous universities across the country have presented this case to their students. The case study describes Heidi’s successful career and how she used her “outgoing personality...and vast personal and professional network [that] included many of the most powerful business leaders in the technology sector.”<sup>54</sup> In 2003, Columbia Business professor, Frank Flynn and New York University professor,

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<sup>52</sup> Sreedhari D. Desai, Dolly Chugh, and Arthur P. Brief, “The Organizational Implications of a Traditional Marriage: Can a Domestic Traditionalist by Night be an Organizational Egalitarian by Day?” UNC Kenan-Flagler Research Paper No. 201319, accessed February 1, 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Andrea S. Kramer and Alton B. Harris, *Breaking Through Bias: Communication Techniques for Women to Succeed at Work* (Brookline, MA: Bibliomotion Inc, 2006) 4.

<sup>54</sup> Kathleen McGinn and Nicole Tempest, *Heidi Roizen*, Harvard Business School Case Study #9-800-228 (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2009).

Cameron Anderson, handed out the study to their students for them to evaluate Heidi's competency and likeability as a leader, with one catch—only half the students were given Heidi's story. The other half of the class were given the same story, but Heidi's name was changed to "Howard."<sup>55</sup>

When the students were asked what their perceptions were of Heidi and Howard, they rated them both as equally competent because their achievements were identical. However, the students rated Howard as the "more appealing colleague" and Heidi as "not the type of person you would want to hire or work for."<sup>56</sup> Two identical cases, with one difference—gender—created very different impressions. The findings of this study support the decades of social science research on gender stereotyping in the workplace. Because men are expected to be powerful, assertive, and high-achieving, they are viewed favorably when they live up to their gender stereotype. Because women are expected to be sensitive, caring, and compassionate, they are not rewarded when they try to step into a world that has been traditionally defined by stereotypical masculine qualities.<sup>57</sup> As proven by the Heidi-Howard study, women are often punished when they try to step outside the status quo, not because they aren't doing an adequate job, but because people are unconsciously uncomfortable with women leading.

This is disheartening and discouraging for women who seek these top roles. But because women are aware that they are not the preferred candidates, they will often go to extreme lengths to better fit into a world that is biased against them. Women in top leadership roles across the world have spent exorbitant amounts of time and money to

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<sup>55</sup> Sheryl Sandberg and Nell Scovell, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 39.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> David Schweider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004).

learn how to “fit into a professional world that was created in the image of men.”<sup>58</sup>

Women change the way they dress, conduct themselves, write emails, and speak in order to not upset the balance. To be liked, women will diminish their personal accomplishments or attribute their success to luck or to someone else.<sup>59</sup> Women apologize all the time, even when they are not sorry, to make people feel more comfortable when they challenge what is being said or being done in the workplace. Women who want to lead know they cannot be too aggressive or assertive; they cannot be too smart or too successful without risking making others feel uncomfortable. This again creates a double bind for women. Women can either lean in to traditionally masculine characteristics and hope people will get used to them being at the table, or they can lean into traditionally feminine characteristics and never be offered a seat.

Furthermore, studies show that women having to act in “stereotypically feminine ways makes it difficult [for them] to reach for the same opportunities as men, but defying expectations and reaching for those opportunities leads to being judged as undeserving and selfish.”<sup>60</sup> This is why so many women work tirelessly to combat the consequences of bias by training themselves to act in an agreeable manner. Instead of a world that was created in the image of man changing and adapting to make room for women, women have had to diminish and disguise their true identities and feelings in order to fit in. This is harmful for several reasons.

First, women are wasting a lot of time, energy, and money that could be spent elsewhere. Second, women are not able to be their true selves. This causes the world to

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<sup>58</sup> Joanne Lipman, *That's What She Said: What Men Need to Know (And Women Need to Tell Them) About Working Together* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 2018), 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>60</sup> Sheryl Sandberg and Nell Scovell, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 43.

lose out on the uniqueness that women can bring to the leadership table and for women to lose out on becoming the leader who God designed for them to be. Third, it excuses the behaviors that bias causes in the workplace. Instead of tackling bias head-on and walking through the process of changing the culture to make room for women, it allows for the status quo to remain directly unchallenged. Instead of having the hard conversations with co-workers or pastors when unconscious bias undeniably presents itself, women choose to remain silent. And in doing so, they never give others in leadership the opportunity to change or to make room for them. Because of unconscious bias and entrenched societal expectations of women, no matter what women do, their path to the top is not easy. It is absolutely possible, but it comes with major challenges, risks, and at a high price. Today, women who want to lead can either dare to lead and make others temporarily uncomfortable when they defy cultural norms, or they can settle to try to fit themselves into the stereotyped status quo.

However, things are looking more promising for women in leadership today. In 2013, the Heidi-Howard case study was repeated at New York University. This time, students still rated Heidi as less trustworthy than Howard, but they now agreed that they would be more willing to work for Heidi.<sup>61</sup> This change is encouraging because women can more easily earn trust if people are naturally inclined to like them as a leader in the first place. It's when people are biased to not trust and not like them that women are placed in an impossible double bind. A 2015 study also affirmed the change in perception of women in leadership positions. This new study reported extremely high levels of pro-female bias for women applying for academic STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering,

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<sup>61</sup> Iris Bohnet, *What Works: Gender Equality By Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 2016), 27.



Math) jobs in the United States.<sup>62</sup> People are slowly but surely becoming more comfortable with women working in non-traditional fields and with women leading in general. However, though the tide has been turning for women in lower-level leadership roles and in certain fields like STEM, there has been “no closure of the gender gap at the top in sight.”<sup>63</sup> This indicates that gender bias is still alive and well.

### ***Comfort for Calling: Challenging Bias***

Many people are in favor of women in ministry and for their advancement, but because they do not consciously think about how they treat and view the women around them, they often find themselves unknowingly biased against women. Bias is most often what prevents women from advancing in leadership roles, from being fairly compensated, or from obtaining jobs in the first place. Bias is what keeps men from mentoring women or from building peer-relationships with them. In many ways, it’s just easier to keep mentoring and promoting men, so women are often viewed unintentionally as an afterthought. But solving bias doesn’t just involve men learning to rethink how they really view women in leadership; women have to be a part of the solution too. Because women also more commonly associate words like leader or boss with men, women need to rethink how they view themselves as well. Everyone must be involved in the process of challenging bias.

In order to successfully challenge unconscious bias and to create an easier world for women to participate in, the comfort of the status quo must be challenged. While

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<sup>62</sup> Wendy M. Williams and Stephen J. Ceci, “National Hiring Experiments Reveal 2:1 Faculty Preference for Women on STEM Tenure Track,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, no. 17, (April 28, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> Iris Bohnet, *What Works: Gender Equality By Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 2016), 28.

stereotypes are natural and unavoidable, the comfort zones they create often prevent women from moving into their God-given roles and callings. Comfort plays a big part in how people respond and react to those around them. If all a person knows or has experienced is men in ministry leadership positions, it's understandable that when women are put in those positions it creates some natural discomfort. The lack of exposure to women in leadership creates unconscious uneasiness. It is also understandable why people want to maintain the status quo. On the most basic level, people crave comfort. They do not want to be challenged or pushed to see things differently. But in order to change the landscape for women in leadership, a challenge must occur. Comfort must be challenged for the sake of women being able to walk in their full callings.

To begin the process of challenging comfort in order to overcome bias, further understanding of how bias presents itself in the workplace, and in the Church especially, must occur. The four main ways that bias presents itself appear in the forms of men versus women, women versus women, the Church versus women, and the internal battle women face against themselves. The next section will closely examine these areas in order to provide further education on how to spot and combat the comfort that unconscious bias brings.

## **How Bias Presents Itself**

### ***Men vs. Women***

Because the world is currently being lead primarily by men, it's natural for men to have an unconscious bias against women. Many men are not used to working with women in higher leadership roles and do not recognize the lack of women at the top as a

problem. (Again, what we see is what we know and what we know is what we are comfortable with. This is our reality.) However, though men are partial contributors to the problem, they are also the perfect candidates for providing solutions for increasing the number of women in ministry. Every male pastor interviewed for this thesis agreed that the Church needs more workers, especially females.<sup>64</sup> However, they also agreed that they as men do not consciously think about this issue. As one pastor put it, “Our society has been a male-dominated culture where men are seen as the workers and leaders, while women handle domestic duties. This has started to shift in the past couple decades, but turning the perception of gender roles, especially in the church, will take a long time. Most men haven’t thought about the lack of women in leadership as a problem.”<sup>65</sup>

Based on my personal interviews and what current research reveals, most men, especially in the Assemblies of God, desire to be a part of the solution. They do want to see women in ministry, but they are not aware of the source of the problem or how to help provide solutions. “They do not see the missing piece.”<sup>66</sup> There are, of course, men who do not think the lack of women in leadership is a problem or who assume that women don’t want to be in leadership because they have other priorities like raising a family. Because most men do not understand the barriers (Chapter 1) that women face to be in leadership, or the challenges that bias creates for them, they do not actively think about this issue and the problem continues to be perpetuated. Most men are not trying to exclude women from leadership positions in their churches, but because of bias, they are not aware that women are missing from these positions in the first place. This leads to them unconsciously overlooking women for leadership positions and from hiring women

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<sup>64</sup> Male Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Scott, Interviewed by author, Kansas, December 10, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> Anthony Navaratnam, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 17, 2018.

for pastoral positions. Most men are biased against women because they simply are not paying attention.<sup>67</sup>

### ***Women vs. Women***

Just as men can be biased against women, women are also just as likely to be biased against other women. In her Ted Talk, “Are You Biased? I Am,” Kristen Pressner, the global head of human resources at a multi-national firm, confessed that she was biased against giving raises to the women in her workplace.<sup>68</sup> Though she is an advocate of women in the workplace, she also succumbed to her unconscious biases. Again, biases affect everyone. Because women don’t see other women at the top, they also tend to become comfortable with working primarily with men or with never making it to the top. As one female pastor said, “I think some women see the problem because it means there are less opportunities for them to be a part of what God is doing. I also think some women don’t see it as a problem because just like men, they just don’t see it.”<sup>69</sup> The ability to see the problem also depends largely on age and life experiences. Millennials definitely have an easier time seeing the problem because they’ve been taught to be inclusive and they’ve seen more women in leadership roles than previous generations.<sup>70</sup> As a whole, women do desire to see other women in leadership roles in the church, but they are unlikely to think about their own personal biases or to recognize the lack of female involvement until they “experience seeing more women in pastoral leadership

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<sup>67</sup> Male Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>68</sup> Kristen Pressner, “Are you Biased? I am,” TedxBasel, August 30, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Jenna Tuck, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 10, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Emily Oakley, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 8, 2018.

roles.”<sup>71</sup>

Women’s biases against other women also negatively contribute to the problem by causing the women who make it to the top to not pull other women up with them. It’s too easy for women to be self-focused and self-promoting. Because they have to work harder to earn their place at the table, they naturally can lose sight of the bigger picture. The bigger picture is that to really change the landscape for women in ministry, there need to be more women making it to the table, more often. The goal isn’t just to make it to the table; the goal is to create a bigger table. Until we see more women in top leadership positions, our unconscious biases and our world cannot truly change.<sup>72</sup>

### ***The Church vs. Women***

If men and women are biased against women in leadership, it’s no surprise that the Church at large is as well. The history and tradition of the Church has always involved and incorporated women in leadership roles, but that tends to not be the way people see it. Though culture and trends have ebbed and flowed, with spikes of higher females in leadership during certain time periods, most people would agree that Church tradition is biased against women as pastors.<sup>73</sup> Church boards, church members, and even pastors themselves, are comfortable with the ways things have always been done, which has created a preference for men and sometimes even a prejudice against women.<sup>74</sup> As a whole, the Church wants women to be involved, but in the ways that are known and comfortable. Children’s Ministry, Women’s Ministry, and anything involving cooking or

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<sup>71</sup> Liz Bratcher, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 11, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> “Melinda Gates: ‘I’m Living Out My Faith in Action.’” Interview by Amy Jackson, *Christianity Today*, September 28, 2016.

<sup>73</sup> Male Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>74</sup> Cameron Combs, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 27, 2018.

organizing are the traditionally acceptable places for women to serve in the Church.

“People seem to be okay with the idea of a woman being in charge, as long as it’s in the areas they are comfortable with.”<sup>75</sup>

This mindset (which can be unconscious and conscious) is what blocks women from serving in non-traditional roles. When asked about the struggle of being hired in a pastoral role, one female youth pastor said, “I would never have been able to follow the call of God on my life in the church I grew up in...thankfully [the pastor who hired me] really believes and supports women in ministry.”<sup>76</sup> Every church is different and will have different views on the role of women in ministry based on their history and tradition. But the history of most churches, based on current statistics,<sup>77</sup> is to not have women in leadership roles, especially paid pastoral positions. In order to battle bias, we must battle tradition. We cannot afford to be sidetracked or blinded by tradition if we want to become the diverse Church that God desires (Gal. 3:28). We must be shaped by the Cross—and at the foot of the Cross, all are equal and welcomed.

However, battling tradition is only half of the problem. For many churches, the bias against women in leadership is not just one of unconscious preference; it is a theological bias as well. Because of Scriptural misunderstandings and false teaching, many choose to support a complementarian view of women over an egalitarian view. Egalitarianism in its most basic form asserts that based on the Scriptures, men and women were equally created in the image of God and should be able to operate equally based on their individual giftings and callings. (This is the official position of the Assemblies of God.) Complementarianism argues that the Scriptures are hierarchical and

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<sup>75</sup> Jenna Tuck, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 10, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> Monica Mast, Interviewed by author, Kansas, February 28, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> “2017 Summary Statistical Report,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

that while men and women are both created in the image of God, leadership roles in the church are reserved solely for men.<sup>78</sup> Naturally, this view leads to the limiting of women leading in the church in pastoral roles.

People who are opposed to egalitarianism typically use the creation story in Genesis to argue for the elevation of men over women and to exclude women from leadership positions. There are three common arguments against egalitarianism. First, God creating Adam first (Gen. 2:7, 2:18-23) signifies the order of importance and creates a clear distinction between men and women as image-bearers of God. Second, since Eve was created to be a “helper” for Adam (Gen. 2:18), and not the other way around, that she was created to be subordinate to him. And third, that the curse as a result of the fall created a distortion of the already existing roles and did not usher in an introduction of new roles based on gender (Gen. 3:16).<sup>79</sup> If God did in fact design Adam and Eve as non-equal partners from the very beginning, the argument against equality for women in leadership is incredibly strong, and egalitarianism has no biblical foundation.

However, this is simply not the case. In reality, the creation account actually offers sound support for the equality of women. First, Genesis 1:26-28 clearly states that Adam and Eve are both created in the image of God, are both given God’s blessing, and are both given the command to multiply and to rule over the world that God created.

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 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 God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

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<sup>78</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 70.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

Because both man and woman bore the image of God, they were both assigned to rule the earth, with no reference to a differentiation in ruling based on their gender. These three verses are the foundation for arguing against the common claims made against egalitarianism.

Therefore, based on the specific biblical evidence provided in Genesis 1:26-28, the argument that Adam was created first actually proves nothing. The creation order of man and woman had nothing to do with authority and submission. Just as Adam being created from the “dust of the earth” (Gen. 2:7) did not make him subordinate to the earth, likewise Eve being created after Adam and from the rib of Adam does not make her directly subordinate to him.<sup>80</sup> “The definition of authority structures between man and woman would have been at least as important as the mention of their authority over ‘every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’”<sup>81</sup> But no such structure is mentioned in the creation story. There is not even the smallest indication, especially when looking at Genesis 1, that any such form of hierarchy exists. Indicating it can be concluded that man and woman were equally created in the “image of God” (Gen. 1:26).

When looking at the argument of Eve being a “helper” (Gen. 2:18) and therefore being subordinate to Adam, a similar exegetical clarification is found. Throughout history, uneducated pastors and teachers used this description of Eve to define her value as unequal to that of a male. “Yet the word ‘ezer’ (helper) is never used in the Hebrew Bible with a subordinate meaning. Seventeen out of the twenty times it is used, it refers to God as the helper. Eve was created to be a helper (kenegdo) ‘suitable’ or ‘corresponding

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<sup>80</sup> Diana Garland, *Family Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 375.

<sup>81</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2006), 20.



to' Adam, not a subordinate.”<sup>82</sup> Being a helper as understood through the Hebrew translation indicates competency and strength.<sup>83</sup> It indicates a partnership that was specifically God-designed and God-ordained. Eve was indeed Adam's equal and was created to be opposite of him, in order that they might complete each other and together be the best representation of God's creation.

In a similar fashion, the argument against the creation of new gender roles after the fall of Adam and Eve can also be dismissed with the application of Scripture. As previously argued, because both man and woman bore the image of God, they were both assigned to rule the earth, with no reference to a differentiation in ruling based on their gender. “Before the fall, men and women related to each other as co-regents, both bearing the image of God and called to join together in caring for the world he had created. Tragically, in the fall, this cooperative relationship was deeply wounded. God's gracious plan for redemption was broken through sin—including the relationship between man and woman.”<sup>84</sup> It is imperative for the understanding of egalitarianism to recognize that male and female were created to be unique in expression but never to be divided in function. There were no role divisions before the fall because the two were created to be one in function, one in heart, and one in physical union.<sup>85</sup> Believing anything other than this distorts God's design for the humankind and for the holy unity of marriage as well.

The intention of God for creation as explicitly stated in Genesis was for man and woman to live in perfect harmony in the Garden. There are no implications otherwise without conducting a false or exaggerated exegesis of the Scriptures. The fall led to

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<sup>82</sup> “The Role of Women in Ministry,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Danielle Strickland, *The Liberating Truth: How Jesus Empowers Women* (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2001), 52.

<sup>84</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2006), 47.

<sup>85</sup> Lisa Bevere, *Without Rival* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 142.

catastrophic consequences for Adam and Eve, not only in their relationship with each other, but also in their relationship with God. When mankind became separated from God because of sin, each gender assumed “primal dependency on his or her original element. Adam’s life became subject to the ground from which he had been taken, and Eve’s to the man from whom she had been taken.”<sup>86</sup> This was not God’s intention for his creation, but because of the sin that was ushered into the world through the choices of Adam and Eve, it became the reality for all to be born into the world. But as true to his nature, God had a plan to reconcile man and woman to each other and back to himself.

The danger with complementarianism is that it pretends to empower women. It falsely sways people with Scriptures that are taken out of context and boxes women into roles that limit their ability to lead others. Complementarianism tells women that God loves them, but that he did not design for them to lead in the same way he created men to lead. Egalitarianism on the other hand, actually empowers women to be whoever God wants them to be—whether that might be a stay-at-home mom, a CEO, a pastor, or a small group leader. Egalitarianism is the closest reflection of the relationship that God created between men and women in the beginning, when everything was perfect and good. This relationship was not based on hierarchy, but on humility and the ability to work as a team in the strengths God gave them. How different our world would look if we allowed men and women to fully operate in the giftings and the callings that God has for them individually, instead of assigning or restricting leadership roles based on gender. How different our churches would look if we addressed false teaching and stopped being afraid of it upending our traditions. To start changing the Church, we must to confront the biases of tradition and theology, with love, grace, and most importantly, with the truth of

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<sup>86</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2006), 43.

God's Word. We have to start empowering women to see themselves how God sees them—as equal partners in the kingdom who God loves and wants to use mightily to help reconcile the world back to him.

### ***Women vs. Themselves***

The final way bias presents itself occurs within women themselves. Women are often their own worst enemy when it comes to applying for jobs or fulfilling leadership responsibilities that have been given to them. Because it's lonely at the top, it's easy for women to doubt their abilities and achievements. When asked about the biggest challenge of being a woman in ministry, many women identified their own insecurities or fears as one of the main problems.<sup>87</sup> Because women know that all eyes are on them and they feel the pressure of overcoming the stereotypes surrounding them, they struggle internally to step into their callings. As one woman said, “women can be their own biggest obstacles.”<sup>88</sup> Social Science research agrees with this. Evidence shows that “women [in general] are less self-assured than men—and to succeed, confidence matters just as much as competence.”<sup>89</sup> This is often why women who are qualified to lead, simply don't. Too often, we hold ourselves back.

To overcome their biases against themselves and their lack of confidence, women must learn how to find their place, how to overcome the idea that they don't have to be a man in order to be successful in ministry, and to truly believe that they are enough.<sup>90</sup> But that is easier said than done. Thanks to bias, tradition, and the barriers women face

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<sup>87</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>88</sup> Karen Yancey, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 3, 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, “The Confidence Gap,” *The Atlantic*, (May 2014).

<sup>90</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

discussed in Chapter 1, women do not have an easy path to the top. Women know the challenge they are up against by trying to break into traditionally male dominated professions and for many, this task seems unachievable.<sup>91</sup> This is often what causes many women to disqualify themselves from lead roles in the first place. Because they don't see many women being welcomed at the top in large enough quantities to impact cultural norms and perceptions, women do not believe they could be the one to change the status quo. This further perpetuates the never-ending cycle of bias and prevents real change from occurring.

If we want to see more women in leadership positions, especially in ministry, we must address the overwhelming role that unconscious bias plays. We must address the ways bias presents itself by bringing awareness to both men and women, by working strategically to change church tradition, by addressing bad theology, and by empowering women to believe in themselves. Bias is not an impossible enemy, but it will take intentional effort and time to overcome.

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<sup>91</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

## **KEYS TO OVERCOMING GENDER BIAS**

When trying to overcome gender bias, three key things can be done in order to decrease its effectiveness in hindering women from reaching leadership positions. The first key is to start examining bias on an individual level. One cannot expect to influence change in this area if he or she is unwilling to wrestle with his or her own biases. Again, unconscious bias is universal—there is no escaping it without intentional effort and ongoing personal examination. The second key is to talk about bias. This includes sharing personal stories and listening with openness and humility to the stories of others. Talking also includes preaching and teaching on this issue, as well as asking for constant feedback. The third key to overcoming bias is to simply take action. Talking about it will never be enough to produce substantial change. Leaders must create opportunities for women to be seen leading, change their policies to be more inclusive, change how and who they hire, and they must go the extra mile to empower the women around them.

### **Examining Personal Biases**

The most important person anyone will ever lead is themselves. It is easy to spot the biases of others, but it is much more difficult to spot personal biases. The first mistake many people make when trying to examine their personal biases is believing they don't have any. To help people discover their unconscious (or implicit) biases, leading bias experts Mahzarin Banaji, Anthony Greenwald, and Brian Nosek created the Implicit Association Test (IAT).<sup>92</sup> Taking the test requires you to categorize words and pictures as quickly as possible. The test was not created to measure what you would choose in an ideal world if you had the time to think it over. It measures how your brain categorizes

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<sup>92</sup> <https://implicit.harvard.edu>

information when it is on autopilot (when biases most commonly form.) The Gender IAT asks test takers to associate “male” and “female” with other words related to career, family, math, or the arts. Based on the test taker’s speed and accuracy, the IAT reveals any hidden biases. Millions of people have taken the test and over 75 percent of them, myself included, were faster at associating women with things related to family or home.<sup>93</sup> Even people who hold strong egalitarian beliefs about gender were slower to associate women with career related words. Why? Because biases are formed when we are not thinking about them. Good people with good intentions can be biased and not even know it.

Taking the time to examine and test your own biases (whether you take the IAT or not) will help guide your process of confronting and outsmarting your personal biases. One good practice for wrestling with bias is called, “flip it to test it.”<sup>94</sup> Whenever you feel yourself struggling internally with someone, pretend they were the opposite gender and see if it still bothers you. Just like with the famous Heidi/Howard case study (Chapter 2), sometimes gender bias is the real culprit behind our struggles in the workplace to work with others of the same or opposite gender. By taking the time to flip it and test it, we can be more aware of bias in our lives. The process really is relatively simple once you accept that you are biased.

### ***Who is at Your Table?***

Once you have accepted that you are biased and that you have some work to do, you can really start examining the areas of your life where your biases have created a lack

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<sup>93</sup> Dolly Chung, *How Good People Fight Bias: The Person You Mean to Be* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 47.

<sup>94</sup> Kristen Pressner, “Are you Biased? I am,” TedxBasel, August 30, 2016.

of equality. The first area to examine is the people you surround yourself with—your leadership team, your staff, your deacon board, your friends. Who do you invite to the table to influence how decisions are made? More often than not, the people we surround ourselves with look too much like us. This is why most companies and churches are run by older white men and why they will continue to be run by older white men. In Fortune 500 Companies, white men account for 72% of senior leaders.<sup>95</sup> In the Assemblies of God, they account for over 60% of the Executive Presbytery and 66% of the Executive Leadership Team.<sup>96</sup> The addition of Donna Barrett to the Executive Leadership Team was historic and needed. The addition of Beth Grant in 2009 as the female ordained representative to the Executive Presbytery and the election of Melissa J. Alfaro in 2017 were also great steps for women being represented in the Assemblies of God.<sup>97</sup> We are making wonderful strides in the Assemblies of God and the executive leadership deserves recognition and praise for their efforts. But the numbers still remain too low. We must start seeing this as the beginning of fixing our diversity problem, not the end. What is happening in the top tiers of our Fellowship, needs to start trickling down.

The real question to ask yourself is, “are you seeking out diversity?” Just welcoming it or being open to it is not enough. You can be open to women leading and never see a woman step onto your platform. You can desire for women to serve on executive leadership teams but never see them serve there. Pastors must actively engage in the process of adding chairs to their leadership tables and inviting qualified women to sit in them—not as tokens, but as valued contributors.

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<sup>95</sup> Stacy Jones, “White Men Account for 72% of Corporate Leadership at 16 of the Fortune 500 Companies,” *Fortune*. Accessed March 1, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> “Our Executive Leadership,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 1, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

### ***The Weight of Words***

Another key to overcoming personal biases is by examining the language you use. As a Master's student, I've had several classes where the instructor or the syllabus referred specifically to pastors with only male pronouns. (I have also had great professors who make a clear effort to use both he and she pronouns when referring to pastors.) Another woman recalls being apart of a class called, "Advanced Communication Skills for Women," while the men were enrolled a class called, "Advanced Expository Preaching."<sup>98</sup> These types of inconsistencies in phrasing linguistically imply that men are pastors and women are not. This may not seem like a big deal, but the message our language sends to others helps to either cement or to challenge our biases.<sup>99</sup> Language is a powerful tool that both implicitly and explicitly communicates what we believe is true. Language can be used to bring inclusion, or to reinforce exclusion. By paying attention to the pronouns we use to describe leaders, we can powerfully communicate who we believe should be leading—anyone. Women already feel alienated. There is no need to make it any worse by being lazy with our pronouns.

### ***Wrestle with It***

Finally, when you have tested for your biases, looked at who is at your table, and examined the language you use to refer to leaders, it is time to wrestle. Wrestle with your everyday attitudes toward women in leadership, wrestle with adding new faces and perspectives to the team, and to wrestle with making an effort every day to "see it." One of the biggest challenges women face in the workplace is people who choose not to

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<sup>98</sup> Kristi Singer, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 6, 2018.

<sup>99</sup> Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2013).



acknowledge that this issue exists. If things are going to change we have to work diligently to see it. We cannot keep pretending that the fight for women's equality in the church is over because a few women have made it to the top. In many ways, the fight is just beginning because for the first time we are able to understand many of the barriers and root causes of what holds women back—the biggest of which is unconscious bias. Men and women must work together to tackle this issue but it will require vigilant self-monitoring and self-awareness. For those of us who are Christians, it will require the help of the Holy Spirit to guide us and to expose the areas in our lives that we need to change in order to make more room at the table. We will wrestle unconscious bias our whole lives; no one ever achieves a status of being completely unbiased. But it is a fight worth fighting and it starts with you.

### **Talk About It**

#### ***Ask Good Questions and Really Listen***

After examining and wrestling with unconscious gender bias on an individual level, it's time to talk about it publically. But before you can effectively preach or teach on this issue from the platform, you have to prioritize listening to the stories of women behind closed doors. This step is not just for men; women need to hear the stories of other women as well. Because women can be equally biased and because women need to know they are not alone in their struggle. In order to successfully gain perspective from women about the ways bias has affected them, leaders must ask good questions and then listen deeply.<sup>100</sup> Every woman will have a different but similar story to tell. What matters is that women feel heard and seen. By creating safe spaces for women to be open, honest, and

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<sup>100</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 16.

vulnerable, leaders can gain tremendous insight into what it's like to be a woman in leadership today and what we can do to help them succeed. Some great questions to ask include, "What opportunities do you think are available to you? What roadblocks have you come up against when you've tried to lead? How does your own internal thinking impact what you lead? How can we, as pastors and church leaders, support you in your leadership?"<sup>101</sup>

Most female leaders have never been asked questions like this before, let alone felt like they could honestly share their opinions. Research indicates that women usually do not share openly about the effects of bias in the workplace because there is a significant risk involved in speaking out. Challenging the status quo threatens the work dynamic; "the way it's always been," and can result in negative performance reviews, strained relationships between coworkers and supervisors, and even termination.<sup>102</sup> The cost to sharing openly about the challenges and barriers of being a woman in leadership often is not worth the risk. Because we have not been willing to wrestle with our biases, we have often dismissed or blatantly denied the valuable feedback women can provide on this issue. Because women don't want to lose future opportunities or cause conflict, they often remain silent.

As the Church, we must engage women as Jesus did—with quality questions and a heart to truly listen. Being willing to do this automatically shifts the dynamic and launches the process of overcoming gender bias. By letting women know that you are serious about changing the culture and they are safe to express how they truly feel, the door is open wide for them to be vulnerable. The door is also wide open for us to learn.

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<sup>101</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 16.

<sup>102</sup> Francesca Gino, "Why It's So Hard to Speak Up Against a Toxic Culture," *Harvard Business Review*. Accessed February 13, 2019.

Ask women to, “say more.” Studies show that asking someone to “say more” usually leads to profoundly deeper and more productive discussion.<sup>103</sup> Women are dying for you to ask them to “say more.” They have a lot to say and a lot to teach us all, if we are willing to initiate the conversation.<sup>104</sup>

### ***Be an Advocate: Speak Out***

After listening to the valuable stories of women’s experiences with gender bias and the barriers they face, we have to become advocates for better aligning our position in the Assemblies of God with our practice. This includes providing accurate public teaching and preaching on the role of women in ministry as well as private conversations with those we lead. We must confront bias when we see it and be willing to speak out kindly against it. Other than being unaware of the issue at hand, there are two key reasons why people do not speak out when they see bias occurring. The first is that people do not believe saying something will actually produce change. Many women fall into this category. Tackling this issue feels too daunting and impossible, leading us to falsely believe that saying something is futile. But research actually indicates the opposite. While speaking out can produce negative or unsatisfactory confrontations, studies show that saying something can reduce bias. Even people who react to the confrontation in a defensive manner show less biased behavior in the future.<sup>105</sup> Saying something does matter. Saying something in public or private is important and necessary for changing biased behavior and mindsets.

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<sup>103</sup> Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead* (New York: Random House, 2018), 40.

<sup>104</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>105</sup> Dolly Chung, *How Good People Fight Bias: The Person You Mean to Be* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 206.

The other reason why people don't speak out when they see or hear about biased behavior is because of a psychological phenomenon known as the bystander effect. Studies have shown that when a person is in trouble, others who are witnessing the situation will not intervene because they think someone else will or that it is not their place.<sup>106</sup> When it comes to gender bias, people who witness explicit or implicit biased behavior typically will not confront it because they assume that someone else will take care of it or that it's not their place to act or to say something.<sup>107</sup> But when we leave the work for someone else, it often means that nothing is ever done and bias behavior continues to prevail. Studies show that when we speak up for others who are being treated unfairly, we demonstrate courage and influence others to follow our example. Demonstrating bravery can motivate bystanders to conquer their fear of the repercussions.<sup>108</sup> As believers, we cannot be afraid of the risk or of the repercussions. We must be advocates who speak truth and who are active participants in confronting bias for what it is—unbiblical behavior.

### ***Follow Up and Feedback***

Because bias is not something that can be solved overnight or with a few good seminars or trainings, leaders must continually follow up with their female leaders. Leaders need to keep the discussion alive. So much of the problem with this issue is that we talk about it once a year, if that, and expect the problem to go away. In order to really change and rewire our brains, we have to work diligently to keep confronting our biases.

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<sup>106</sup> "The Bystander Effect," Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified July 13, 2016.

<sup>107</sup> Francesca Gino, "Why It's So Hard to Speak Up Against a Toxic Culture," *Harvard Business Review*. Accessed February 13, 2019.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

The easiest way to do this is to ask the women around you how you're doing. Have they felt more empowered? Have they felt like people are seeing or treating them differently? Have you personally said or done anything that was biased or implied bias? Hopefully because of successful conversations with the women in leadership around you, they feel like they can openly tell you when bias is happening. But again, you may need to keep asking the questions for a while before women really believe they can say anything without negative ramifications occurring. Keep the conversation going. Keep the door open. Keep pushing for change and asking for input. "Talking about it" is a cyclical process of asking questions and listening, confronting the issue in private and in public with the truth of God's Word, and actively seeking and openly welcoming honest feedback. Keep the cycle going long enough and the heavy influence of gender bias on women's advancement in ministry will weaken.

### **Take Action**

The final step to overcoming gender bias is taking action within your organization. Again, it is not enough to just talk about bias, though talking is essential to overcoming bias. Without taking specific action to deal with biased policies and procedures within the Church, bias will most likely continue. The four areas where bias needs to be addressed include the platform, current policies, hiring processes, and empowerment/discipleship strategies.

### ***The Platform***

One of the easiest ways to confront unconscious gender bias is by strategically

placing women in positions where they can be seen leading. Because what we see is what we know, changing what we see on a regular basis can greatly reduce the impact of gender bias.<sup>109</sup> Most people grow up in churches where women do not regularly preach or lead actively from the stage.<sup>110</sup> Women may be an integral part of the church and teach in other capacities like Sunday School or in a life group, but they commonly are not found on the platform. Placing qualified women on the platform to preach, to pray, to lead communion, or to simply be seen in a public leadership capacity, changes the perception of what women can do. It also changes women's perceptions of themselves and builds confidence in their abilities.

For hundreds of years women have been active participants in the church. But often as you look around the church, it's only men who hold the seats of perceived power or public leadership. The church must start acknowledging women's contributions and when called to pastoral ministry, give them increased responsibility to lead publically. To change what is viewed as "normal," especially for future generations, women need to be seen. This will potentially require some training and mentoring, but the Church has to start empowering the other half of its congregants to lead.

An important note here is not to just add women to the platform as tokens or "two-kens" (Chapter 2.) Carefully select the women for platform ministry just as you would select a man. They should meet biblical standards for leadership and have a proven track record of faithfulness within the church. Adding women just for the sake of adding women will potentially do more harm than good. Prioritize quality female participants

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<sup>109</sup> Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (New York: Delacorte Press, 2013), 152.

<sup>110</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

over quantity. Over time, the quantity of qualified women will grow if we are faithful to publically empower a few.

### ***Biased Policies***

The next key area to focus on in order to expose bias on is to look at the printed and unprinted policies of your organization. For example, is the language in your church constitution and by-laws inclusive toward females serving as deacons or board members? If not, take active steps to change it. Present the biblical backing for women serving as deacons (Romans 16:1-2) and change biased language and behaviors that have kept women from serving in this capacity. Make more room at the table by addressing theological and language-based bias. Sometimes correcting bias is as simple as changing a few words. Other times it requires challenging scriptural misunderstandings and false perceptions of how women can serve in the church. Every Assemblies of God church should be moving to challenge biased policies. Whether it is changing the wording of formal documents or changing the unspoken rules that dictate who can serve in leadership roles in the church.

While printed documents can create rigid gender rules in the church, unspoken policies can be equally damaging. “We’ve never had a *female* pastor.” “Women usually don’t lead *that* ministry.” Every church has unspoken policies that dictate who typically serves where. People are comfortable seeing women in care ministry positions. For most churches, that means women typically serve in Children’s Ministry or Women’s Ministry.<sup>111</sup> Though churches may desire to see more gender diversity, the precedents that have been set in the past serve as the unspoken rules for how people think things

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<sup>111</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

should be done. In many ways, the perception of the congregation itself directly dictates who will be allowed to serve and who will not. Pastors and church leaders must work hard to actively challenge “the way it’s always been done” by supporting and putting qualified women in uncommon positions in the church. Have women serve as ushers, deacons, pastors, and preachers. Challenge bias by intentionally incorporating women into positions that have always been male dominated because of tradition or a lack of open opportunities. Overcoming bias must include equity in written and unwritten policies.

### ***Hiring***

One of the most common issues cited by women in ministry is the difficulty in being hired.<sup>112</sup> Because many churches have not had female pastors, it often seems like too great a risk or just too much work to add a woman to the team. When it comes to hiring, unconscious bias rules. For pastors who are wrestling with their own personal biases and see the need to add women to their staff, hiring a woman will not be as much of a struggle. However, because overcoming bias is often more difficult than we realize, sometimes further action needs to be taken. The Heidi/Howard case study from Chapter 2 is a powerful reminder of how men are still the favored candidates even when the resumes are literally identical. One way pastors can challenge their unconscious biases when it comes to hiring is by employing first-level blind hiring practices. Research has proven that in male-dominated fields women have a better chance of getting hired if their

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<sup>112</sup> Female Interviews, interviewed by author, 2018-2019.



first interview is conducted blindly<sup>113</sup>—no names, no gender pronouns, just their qualifications. Further interviews to evaluate chemistry and fit need to be conducted, but by looking at the initial applicants without their gender, pastors can fight the effects of unconscious bias and give women a better chance of getting a second interview.

The second part of fixing hiring processes requires addressing the issue of women not applying in the first place. It's hard to hire women if no women feel like they are qualified to apply. Research indicates the language used in hiring ads can either encourage women to apply or deter them. (Remember the 60/100 Rule from Chapter 1.) Using words or phrases like “proven track record,” “extremely,” or “highly qualified” tend to attract men, while phrases like “a passion for learning” attracts women.<sup>114</sup> If you want to encourage women to apply, make it clear that you do not expect them to have all the answers or a wealth of experience (because if no one else has ever hired them, they probably won't.) Women may not be applying in high volumes for pastoral positions now, but if the 60/100 barrier is torn down, they just might.

### ***Extra-Mile Empowering***

The final step to fully empower women in your congregations to become who God wants them to be requires current leaders, both male and female, to go the extra mile, as Jesus did. In Matthew 5:41, Jesus tells his followers, “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.” This is exactly what Jesus did for every woman he encountered. He saw them, he taught them, and he empowered them as equal partners in the Kingdom of God. Because most women have never experienced this, pastors must

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<sup>113</sup> Joanne Lipman, *That's What She Said: What Men Need to Know (And Women Need to Tell Them) About Working Together* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 2018), 146-154.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

prioritize and focus on discipling, equipping, and empowering women in the same way they do men. Leaders need to become talent scouts who spot women with potential and call it out in them. The Church needs to see women for who God says they are and encourage them to step into their individual callings. Until women are seen, encouraged, and equipped to be leaders, unconscious gender bias cannot be overcome. We have to change what we see and what we know in order to create a new normal that people can comfortably accept. The next chapter will focus on practical ways for churches to employ extra-mile empowering strategies to help women succeed. Our world needs women to lead, but in order for them to become leaders it will take a few good people who are willing to go the extra mile.

## HELPING WOMEN IN MINISTRY SUCCEED

Educational statistics show that women have the same access to education as men. There are statistically more female graduates than male graduates.<sup>115</sup> Pre-graduation women believe they have the same shot as the men they graduate with. But post-graduation statistics tell a different story. The number of credentialed female ministers and pastors alone reflects that women do not have the same level of post-graduate access to ministry positions as men.<sup>116</sup> Women arrive at the door of ministry ready, not realizing the challenges they are about to face, typically alone.<sup>117</sup> They may get hired, but the likelihood of them advancing or staying in their position are low. Female pastors typically lack experienced mentors, willing sponsors, and basic peer relationships.<sup>118</sup> They lack access to the tools that help men succeed in leadership positions.

Because of this, female leaders find themselves feeling abandoned and alone, drowning in a world that claims it wants them to lead, but does not adequately empower or equip them to do so. This leads to many women walking away from ministry, never getting through the door, or never really rising to their full potential as a ministry leader. Every day women silently slip through the cracks and we miss out on what their unique leadership could have brought to our organizations and our world. This final chapter will address three specific ways the church can help women succeed in their ministry positions (though there are many additional barriers that could be addressed.) It will also address the importance of paying attention to this issue. It is easy to overlook the lack of women in ministry, to make excuses as to why women don't want to lead, or to feel like

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<sup>115</sup> "Education Statistics 2015-2016," *National Center for Education Statistics*. Accessed December 2, 2018.

<sup>116</sup> "2017 Summary Statistical Report," *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

<sup>117</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>118</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019).

this issue has already been solved. But until the day Jesus returns, the Church has a mandate to equip and empower everyone and it's time we made women a priority.

### **Mentoring**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the biggest barriers for women obtaining jobs is a lack of mentoring. Many women believe that men are unwilling to mentor them because it requires “extra work.”<sup>119</sup> Men mentoring women, especially in the church, does require more boundaries, thought, and planning, but it is crucial and necessary for women to be able to develop their leadership skills and understanding. Current research shows that “85 percent of women need extra help navigating the ‘unwritten rules’ of an organization because most of these rules are learned through informal conversations (mentoring) than through formal training.”<sup>120</sup> When women don't have access to these kinds of moments with a senior leader, they are unprepared to lead when complicated leadership/organizational moments arise later. Mentoring matters. Mentoring is often what makes the difference not only in getting a job in the first place, but also between whether or not a woman will succeed in that position in the long run.

Men are typically reluctant to mentor women because of bias and because of fear.<sup>121</sup> Bias causes them to only make connections with what is comfortable—other men, and fear causes them to push women toward other women. But if most women are not in places of pastoral leadership, how can they possibly mentor female pastors? This model is comparable to asking someone who has never played soccer a day in their life to coach

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<sup>119</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>120</sup> Dan Schawbel, “Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Find a Sponsor Instead of a Mentor,” *Forbes*, September 20, 2013.

<sup>121</sup> Brad Johnson and David Smith, *Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women* (New York, NY: Bibliomotion Inc, 2016).

a team of new players. That person can have insight gleaned through reading books, listening to podcasts, or watching games on TV, but because they have never been in the game themselves, they cannot really offer quality insight or training. But this is often how we treat women who seek out mentorship in the workplace. We push them onto other women who probably have the capacity to spiritually mentor them or to offer them advice on being a woman, but who do not have the ability to mentor them from a workplace/pastoral position because they've never been in that position themselves. You cannot mentor someone into a place where you have never been yourself. Mentoring is all about showing someone the path you've walked and helping them to forge their own by learning from your path. Because men are primarily the people in positions of leadership, they must be the primary mentors for new leaders.

### ***Fighting Fear***

Men tend to be afraid of mentoring women because they don't want to have to get too personal with their female staff members out of fear of crossing any boundaries or because they are afraid they won't be able to relate to the personal and professional dilemmas women encounter in the workplace.<sup>122</sup> First, fear is a real and valid reason to struggle with the thought of mentoring women. One study found that 64 percent of men in senior leadership are hesitant to have one-on-one meetings with female employees. Likewise, half of female employees avoid close contact with their male bosses.<sup>123</sup> Especially in the wake of the #MeToo Movement, fear of being perceived of saying or doing something inappropriate has heightened. In the church it's no different. Affairs and

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<sup>122</sup> Brad Johnson and David Smith, *Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women* (New York, NY: Bibliomotion Inc, 2016), 24.

<sup>123</sup> Sylvia Ann Hewlett, "The Sponsor Effect," *Harvard Business Review*, December 2010, 5-7.

sexually inappropriate behavior are no respecters of vocation. But fear is not a good enough excuse for excluding women from mentorship opportunities and there are several easy solutions for this barrier.

The first solution is to always “take two.”<sup>124</sup> Male leaders can easily avoid being perceived as inappropriate if they always take two people with them at all times (could be a male and female staff member or two female staff members.) By doing this, leaders instantly double their development efforts, create a safe environment, and foster peer relationships.<sup>125</sup> (This does not mean leaders should not still make time for crucial one-on-one conversations with female staff members in the appropriate settings.)

This leads to the second solution: put boundaries in place in the office and create a safe environment by prioritizing training and accountability. Some of the best practices for boundaries include having glass windows in every office door or keeping doors propped open, installing anti-pornography software on church computers, and discouraging staff members from meeting someone in an intimate setting or in a setting where no one is present to hold you accountable (i.e. everyone else in the office has left for the day.)<sup>126</sup> Offer regular training on boundaries, gender bias, and sexual harassment in the workplace. Talk about this issue openly, clearly, and hold every staff member accountable. The truth is, if people want to find a way around boundaries to sin, they will. “If you have a predator on your team, these guidelines are not going to stop him or her. But it will deter someone who is looking for an easy opportunity and hopefully protect anyone who stumbles into a moment of weakness.”<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 105-106

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 106

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

Third, challenge the meaning of the word mentor and the stereotypes around what being a mentor is. Men are often afraid of mentoring women because they are afraid they can't relate to women. But mentoring is not an all-encompassing word. It does not have to be spiritual, personal, and work related. Mentoring does not have to require exposing personal struggles or sins to people of the opposite gender. Female pastors are not looking for men to be their spiritual and personal mentors; they are looking for some directed work-place/ministry guidance. When we start to view mentorship as a part of the job, as crucial to the success of employees and volunteers, it doesn't feel as intimidating and it actually may start to feel important. Women do not need men to understand all the ins and outs of their struggles as females (though having a basic understanding is helpful) they just want to be handed access to the same tools as their male counterparts. Implement appropriate boundaries, don't be afraid, stop making excuses, and start mentoring.

### ***Formalize It and Normalize It***

When mentoring is simply something we do for all staff members, no excuses, it becomes a formal part of our training processes. When mentoring becomes more formalized, it also becomes more normalized—it's something that is organizationally accepted. Make mentoring a priority, schedule meetings and trips with the "two," but also make time in the office for "the one." Use boundaries and training to formalize the mentoring processes. The church needs to normalize mentoring for women because in order to lead well, women need access to the map. Some of these valuable training tools include "strategic planning, fund-raising, finance/budgets, vision casting, community

relations, volunteer team building, biblical literacy, theological accuracy, and public speaking/preaching.”<sup>128</sup> Teach women how to navigate problems with church members, staff members, and how to have difficult conversations in general. Teach them how to balance work and family life. Give them opportunities to ask questions and just pick your brain. If every woman on every church team were equipped with the right tools and the right mentor, the landscape for women in ministry would change instantly. But until leaders address this barrier and give women access to male mentors, the status quo can never change.

### **Sponsorship**

Along with mentoring, sponsorship in the workplace is another important element for women advancing in ministry. While mentors give insight, advice, and guidance, sponsors invest in the specific growth and career advancement of other leaders.<sup>129</sup> This kind of investment leads to pay raises, high-profile assignments, and promotions.<sup>130</sup> A sponsor advocates actively for their protégé and tries to provide them with new opportunities for development and advancement. Simply put, sponsors open doors. Studies have shown that minority employees with a sponsor are 65 percent more likely to be satisfied with their rate of advancement in their workplace.<sup>131</sup> When senior men mentor women, it’s a win. But “it’s even better when they champion and sponsor them. Any male leader who is serious about moving toward a more equal world can make this a

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<sup>128</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 83.

<sup>129</sup> Sylvia Ann Hewlett, *Forget a Mentor, Find a Sponsor* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 18-20.

<sup>130</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 84.

<sup>131</sup> Dan Schawbel, “Sylvia Ann Hewlett: Find a Sponsor Instead of a Mentor,” *Forbes*, September 20, 2013.



priority and be a part of the solution. It should be a badge of honor for men to sponsor women.”<sup>132</sup>

However, current trends reveal that women are much less likely to be sponsored due to the lack of women at the top to sponsor them and because men typically avoid (or are unaware that they should be) sponsoring women.<sup>133</sup> This is true in ministry as well.<sup>134</sup> And this lack of sponsorship is often what prevents women from advancing and limits others being exposed to their leadership. If we want to see more qualified women in leadership, we need sponsors to help advocate for their place at the table and in the pulpit. Pastors and church leaders need to be aware of the women around them who have potential and give them opportunities to grow as leaders. Women need to be given opportunities to be seen. If we want to change the perception that most women don’t lead, we are going to have to advocate and push for their leadership from the top levels of leadership across the board. This requires action on the local level with pastors sponsoring their own staff members and church leaders. But it also requires action on the District level as well. District leaders and presbyters can easily come alongside female leaders and promote them on their journey by giving them opportunities “to serve on committees, be visible participants at District Council, or to audit presbytery meetings.”<sup>135</sup> Sponsorship is simple, but it requires intentional action and effort on multiple levels in order to make a significant impact for women.

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<sup>132</sup> Sheryl Sandberg and Nell Scovell, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 71-72.

<sup>133</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 85

<sup>134</sup> Donna Barrett, Interviewed by author, November 17, 2018.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

## Peer Relationships

Once a woman gets through the door and secures a ministry position or job, they often find themselves feeling very alone. Not only do they lack mentors and sponsors, but they lack peer relationships as well. Because there are so few females in lead ministry positions and many men in ministry have never worked with women on this level before, women who are in pastoral positions find themselves without friends. They can bond with their male pastor's wives, or join the women's ministry group, but it is not the same as having quality peer relationships with people who are in their same or a similar position. Peer relationships bring valuable insight, feedback, creative ideas, collaboration, and help ward off feelings of being stranded on a leadership island. Sometimes peer relationships can be even more important and more beneficial than mentors or sponsors.<sup>136</sup> Just as men do, women need to be connected to others on their team and to others outside their team in order to be successful. Leadership is lonely, but it's even lonelier as a female leader.<sup>137</sup>

One study found that two thirds of women claim that the social aspect of work is a major reason why they stay at their company or organization.<sup>138</sup> When organizations fail to encourage healthy peer relationships between men and women, they become less likely to recruit and retain women on their staff.<sup>139</sup> Many organizations fail to cultivate healthy relationships between men and women due to fear of crossing boundaries (as described in the mentoring section) and because our culture as a whole struggles to engage in healthy male-female relationships. As one male pastor put it, "It seems like we only have two

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<sup>136</sup> Sheryl Sandberg and Nell Scovell, *Lean In* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 74.

<sup>137</sup> Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

<sup>138</sup> Jane Miller and Amy Adkins, "Women Want Close Relationships at Work," *Gallup Business Journal*, December 14, 2016. Accessed March 3, 2019.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

approaches [to friendship]; the overly cautious approach, which doesn't allow any sort of intimacy between friends, or a hyper-sexualized approach. There are not many good examples of intimate friendships between men and women, especially in the church.”<sup>140</sup>

Another male pastor added, “Because of scandals and accusations in churches, especially in the past couple decades, pastors have had to be overly cautious about being alone with the opposite gender. Due to this, male pastors have to be very intentional about how they build a quality relationship with female pastors. Because intentionality involves extra thought and effort, most pastors would rather avoid the situation all together.”<sup>141</sup>

Once again, our fear, our excuses, our sin, and our complacency have overshadowed the needs of women to be included and incorporated into typical workplace/ministry comradery. Men freely enjoy friendships with each other and benefit from a sense of strong peer relationships. If we want to retain and encourage women in ministry, this must change. Not just because women need men, but because men need women too. Having a variety of perspectives and backgrounds is crucial for growth in any organization. Every single pastor interviewed for this thesis was in agreement that we are better together—men and women—and that the church benefits greatly when we work together as partners.<sup>142</sup> It's time we stopped being so afraid.

In light of this, male pastors must recognize how difficult and lonely it is for many female pastors and welcome them to take a seat at the table. Female pastors must also work hard to intentionally forge relationships and to pull up a chair. It's a two-way street. It is possible to build strong relationships while prioritizing and maintaining boundaries. Men and women have a lot to teach each other and to learn from each other.

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<sup>140</sup> Cameron Combs, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 27, 2018

<sup>141</sup> Michael Scott, Interviewed by author, Kansas, November 27, 2018

<sup>142</sup> Male and Female Interviews, Interviewed by author, 2018-2019.

It's time to challenge the status quo of relationships between men and women and build healthy friendships with members of the opposite sex. We need each other.

### **Why Women Matter**

In the past decade people have started paying more attention to women. The war is being publically waged to see sexual harassment banished from the workplace (#MeToo), to close the wage gap, to address the barriers women around the world face, and to encourage women to reach their full, God-given potential as leaders. You don't have to look far to see it. You also don't have to look far to see the many benefits of solving these issues and the practical solutions that are within arms reach. But the majority of people tend to talk about these issues like they are impossible problems, as if they are too deeply ingrained into our society and trying to solve them would stir up too much controversy. We blame sin. We blame Eve. We blame culture. We remain silent. For too long the Church has remained too silent about this issue, both in speech and action. The Church has developed bad theology and bad practices that have excluded women from leadership. In doing so the message sent to women is clear—Jesus loves you, but we do not. We have sat silently in our pews, content with the way things have always been, as the women of the world have been longing for more. For the more that Jesus promised them. For the more that the Church sometimes claims to support, but often fails to practice.

This research serves as both a call to awareness and a call to arms. It's a call to slow down and see this issue clearly for what it is—not God's plan. It's a plea for leaders to listen with humility to the stories of women—to know what they face and how they

feel. And it is a petition for the Church to take the necessary steps to rectify this problem—to take immediate action. It’s time to stop ignoring it, to start talking about it, and to be the Church God meant for us to be; a Church that reflects what heaven will look like. Currently there are 70 million women who attend church in the United States.<sup>143</sup> If every one of those women volunteered one extra hour per month, an additional 840 million volunteer hours would be unleashed in our churches every single year.<sup>144</sup> In the Assemblies of God alone there are 9,510 credentialed female ministers.<sup>145</sup> What would it look like if every single one of them were equipped and empowered to walk more fully in their calling? What would happen if the barriers were torn down and the divide between men and women closed just a little bit more? Heaven would come down. That’s what would happen. The prayer of the Church for Jesus to return would be answered more swiftly because our workforce would double. More people in the workforce means more people can be reached, disciplined, and impacted for the Kingdom.

Historically, women flocked to Jesus and to the early Church because they were handing out what no one had ever given them before—true equality; a chance to not only be seen, but to be involved in important Kingdom work. This was not just a perceived equality or the promise of equality, it was a genuine God-created equality that allowed them to learn (Luke 10:39-42), to serve (Romans 16:7), to participate (Luke 8:2-3), and to go (Mark 16:15). A woman’s worth was no longer dictated by cultural practices, but by the resurrected Christ. Since then, women have been a crucial part of every great

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<sup>143</sup> Barna Group, “Christian Women Today: What Women Think of Faith, Leadership, and Their Role in the Church,” August 13, 2012. Accessed March 2, 2019.

<sup>144</sup> Kadi Cole, *Developing Female Leaders* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2019), 179.

<sup>145</sup> “2017 Summary Statistical Report,” *Assemblies of God USA*. Accessed January 10, 2019.

revival and awakening throughout history.<sup>146</sup> Men and women equally serving God together is the “hallmark of our evangelical heritage.”<sup>147</sup> But along the way, we’ve strayed from our roots. We’ve strayed from God’s design for us to be co-laborers and have settled into the gender roles culture has dictated we play. And in doing so, the Church has lost its effectiveness.

By excluding women from leadership in the Church, whether intentionally or unintentionally, we have limited our potential to reach the world. For centuries, the Church has been knowingly operating with one hand tied behind its back. It’s time to start seeing women for who God created them to be—Kingdom contributors and powerful partners; as equals and as important. It’s time to align our position with our practice and see the greatest unleashing of God’s Spirit on our world. As we look at the state of the world today, Jesus’ famous words in Matthew 9:37 could not be truer; “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” If we really believe that in the last days God will pour out His Spirit on His sons and daughters (Joel 2:28-29), we must start acting like it by including His daughters in the work of the harvest. By including women fully in that work, the Church would double its effectiveness and its impact. Women matter because they represent the other half of God’s human creation, the other half of the workforce, the other half of His plan to bring the Gospel to all the world. In light of this, the Church must rise up and work diligently to include and empower women, not just for the sake of women, but for the sake of a world that is longing to know the love of Jesus; displayed in its fullness through men and women working together to give their lives completely to the call to come and follow (Matthew 4:19).

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<sup>146</sup> Donald and Lucille Dayton, “Recovering A Heritage: Part 11 Evangelical Feminism” *Sojourners*, (August/September 1974), p. 7.

<sup>147</sup> Mimi Haddad, “Women and Revival Work,” *The Priscilla Papers*. Vol. 8, Issue 3. 1994.

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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWS

### **Interview 1: Donna Barrett** **Conducted: November 17, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

General Secretary of the AG (formerly lead pastor/church planter 16 years; associate pastor 7 years; youth pastor 10 years.)

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

The tension in the body of Christ between egalitarianism and complementarianism and the gap between our practice and theology on women in ministry.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

The gap from the call and college to then getting an opportunity for an internship, mentoring, resume into district offices and churches that are willing to hire a woman for a pastoral position.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

They don't see examples of women leading at high levels; they haven't had someone come along side to encourage and "sponsor" their journey; they get distracted with other pursuits (wife, mother, career). 51% of women enter Bible College and 6% end up in pastoral ministry. It's hard.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

We need more opportunities for the CALL to be heard around an altar of prayer and not just at youth camp and convention; Camps and Conventions need female speakers and role models; men and women need opportunities to preach, pursue their call, start their education and have older ministers mentor and sponsor them.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

Have area presbyters help their pastors (1) develop a sermon on what the Bible says about women in ministry (2) revise your bylaws to be gender inclusive (3) move toward have a board comprised of both men and women; Ask district superintendents to host women speakers for general sessions of their events. Intentionally invite credentialed women to serve on committees, be visible participants at District council, parliamentary committee, tellers, resolutions committee members reading from the stage; invite a credentialed woman to audit meetings (presbytery meetings) give devotions to district staff; require subcommittees that interview for credentials or moral failures to always include at least one woman.

7. **Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?** I think they are comfortable with male colleagues and don't want the challenge of being inclusive, sensitive, welcoming and don't realize what it does to a culture to omit what women bring and don't realize their work force to bring in the harvest could double if they opened the door to their female colleagues.
8. **Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
Yes, they know they are called but don't see enough examples of what to do with that and have no one to help them step forward in US pastoral opportunities. (they have to be a kids pastor or leave the country as a missionary)
9. **What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**  
Shows the lost world we're trying to reach there is someone like you on the stage and we are inclusive from the leadership level.  
The unique gifts God put in men and women differently are all needed t the table.  
We model to our parishioners working in the secular marketplace this is how men and women honor one another, follow healthy boundaries of integrity and work shoulder to shoulder as colleagues in the work place. We need each other. We are healthier when all parts of the Body of Christ are functioned as God gifted and called. We are better together.
10. **A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**  
Thank God for the courage of Superintendent Doug Clay to lead our Executive Presbytery in electing the first female to the Executive Leadership Team as the general secretary last April. That sent a message of inclusion and value across our movement that this is how we let our theology and practice come into alignment. That move affirmed women everywhere that they are welcome to the leadership table as God has called and equipped them.

**Interview 2: Karen Yancey**  
**Conducted: November 3, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Network Development Director – Kansas Assemblies of God District.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

Quite honestly due to the person I married I have not experienced push-back or a misogynist mentality toward me, regarding my personal call to vocational ministry. Terry has always served as my biggest cheerleader. I was called at age 16 prior to us even meeting.

I served Kansas as Women’s Ministries Director for 10 years. During that time and subsequently God opened many doors for me to minister inside the Network and several doors of ministry in other states. However, I noticed once I moved out of the role of Women’s Ministries Director for the state and launched a director role for the Network Development department, I began to observe a difference in the way “some men in leadership” viewed my role. It seemed fine for me to lead 1,000 women at a Women’s Conference but once I entered a new role that included ministry to male and female leaders in our Network I “sensed” there was an underlying “angst” about a woman teaching/leading/training men. I would say it was most noticeable in the Coaching initiative I launched. Therefore, instead of “kindly pushing through it” my confidence waned, and I invited men to serve as the “Consultant” over the Coaching initiative in hopes that more men would see the value in this ministry tool. After a few years of the initiative languishing due to those men not having enough time to oversee that ministry I took it “back” and have served not only as the overseer through directorship but also specifically as the Consultant. My confidence has soared, and I sense that I’m back in the chair God had originally designed for me, but I allowed “fear of man” to distract me from my true calling. Therefore, I believe one of my greatest challenges was ME. I placed myself in the proverbial box of hesitation and allowed myself to assume men preferred I stayed there. That self-imposed ideology has no merit.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Once again, I believe women can be their biggest obstacle. Though I don’t agree with aggression, I do believe women should function in godly assertiveness. With the help of God, women need to let go of feelings of intimidation, inadequacies, comparisons and step into God-directed leadership. I remember when I was first making presentations to an “all men” Presbytery Board, I would typically begin my statements with “you men make me nervous” or some kind of statement that my husband would emphatically “call out” later that evening and state – “you’re smart, you’re called, you know what you’re talking about, step up and share with confidence.” It made all the difference in the world. Many men see women through a lens of “she’s dictated by her emotions.” Though emotions are part of who we are we should carefully limit them depending on the circumstances. Men and women should

mutually respect one another. I believe men are more likely to respect a woman who steps up with assurance and courage and “sits down at the table” with confidence. (She sometimes has to make room for her at the table. Kind insertion. A phone call ... “have you considered inviting a credentialed woman onto this team?”

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I think it’s awesome that in Kansas 27% of credential holders are women, and it’s growing!

I think it helps when we have men who champion the call of women to ministry leadership.

I believe there may be several women who sense a call of God on their life and don’t pursue it for various reasons:

- “My husband is called, and I will serve with him. Therefore, I don’t need a credential to serve.”
- Lack of encouragement and affirmation from others.
- They forget the VALUE in it. From my perspective, it lends itself to credibility.
- I’ve seen women begin the journey and then busyness trumps the necessary steps to accomplish gaining a credential.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

Honestly, I think WE could do better for both genders. However, I believe it’s still easier for a young man to find mentorship from a pastor than it is for a young woman. Yet, I know there are male pastors that find themselves in a “bind” due to their call to integrity and wanting to live above reproach and not have a “hint” of immorality in their lives. So healthy, godly, guardrails prevent them from meeting with a woman alone. This often adds to the loneliness/feeling of isolation/ of a young woman who is called.

I know my husband spoke with Darin Stroud at length about a potential system of getting young people who are called at camp into the credential pipeline. Some have taken advantage of SAGU online and AGKSOM etc. but there are still others falling through the cracks. It seems we need to create a mentor/mentee relationship as soon as camp concludes

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

I think we have a responsibility to keep the “vision of women in ministry leadership” in front of the people not only by what we say but what we do. For instance, at Centennial Council last year my husband utilized women who are pastors to read the roster, read the resolutions and pray over the business meeting. We also have had credentialed women speak at Council the past two years: Beth Grant and Cheri (Cauthon) Baldree. This doesn’t FIX the issue, but it begins to PROACTIVELY address it. There was a woman on the ballot for a Regional Presbyter, but she did not

receive the required number of votes. I'd like to see that happen and it not be a "token" woman on the Board, but one elected from her male and female peers. I have deeply appreciated our NATIONAL leadership inviting Beth Moore, Lisa Bevere and other outstanding women to speak at Influence Conference prior to General Council. I also recall Alicia Chole speaking for one of the General Council services. This type of "promotion" is fantastic.

The appointment by the Executive Presbytery of Donna Barret to serve as the national Executive Secretary sends a healthy message to our organization.

I think on a local level it can look the same. Young women speaking in youth but also leading small groups, preaching in the main service from time to time. Calling out their capacities through assessments / mentoring.

I think it's cool when a credentialed man and credentialed woman present together. Whether it's a husband and wife or two called individuals it displays solidarity and equal collaboration.

If the local church has a blog site – utilize both credentialed men and women as guest bloggers, without pointing out ... "we have a woman sharing today." I think the credentialed woman should not be relegated to only speak on Mother's Day. Perhaps the credentialed woman speaking on Father's Day and the man on Mother's Day.

This may seem small, but I believe incremental improvements produce healthy change.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I believe those men who know the roots of the Assemblies of God realize that many of our pioneer missionaries and pastors were women. I know men who once were vehemently against women in ministry that now see the blessing of both genders working side-by-side to reach the unclaimed and disciple those in the faith. These men do see fewer women as a problem.

I believe we have had an influx of men who no longer believe that women are an integral part of the mission. Regretfully ... my opinion ... I believe these men have listened to or read people who have a totally different view of theology. John MacArthur is exceptionally influential. He has some GREAT commentaries on much of the scripture, but he is adamantly against credentialing women and the Baptism of the Spirit, yet several AG pastors use his material. I'm not judging them because I know his study is rich in many places in the Bible, but it is certainly an issue when they respect a man who is in direct opposition to our fundamental beliefs in the AG. (That's just one example)

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

It's interesting, I have heard several women in ministry leadership state, "I believe in credentialing women, but I could never attend a church where the pastor is a female." We currently have four lead pastors in Kansas who are women.

We have had and currently have several female missionaries.



**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

It immediately DOUBLES our ministry workforce.

It's a picture to our culture of how men and women can treat each other with respect and honor.

It creates a DNA of mutual submission.

It's biblical! There are multiple examples of women leading and teaching in the scripture. Including teaching men.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I grew up in an Assemblies of God home. My parents were devout Christians and loyal church goers. My mother taught Sunday School. We were at church every Sunday AM, PM and Wednesday PM. If a prayer meeting was called or a work day ... we attended. My mom and dad never became members because my dad smoked. It truly was a vice for him. He had his first heart attack when he was only 48 ... the Dr said you must give up smoking. He smoked unfiltered Camels which were the worst kind, but he had started smoking in third grade. Even after his heart attack I would see him "sneak" cigarettes. However, none of us – my mother or my siblings ever mentioned it to him. Because I grew up in such a strict environment and a church context that bent toward legalism I feared for my dad's salvation when he passed at age 60. I was so convinced that his "poor habit" would keep him out of heaven. I never heard him speak ill of anyone. He was a great, godly man, but it's interesting how "legalism" can blind people to the Truth. I KNOW I WILL see Him again.

I loved attending Southern Missouri church camp. Boys and Girls, and Youth Camp. When old enough to "work" camp I went multiple times every summer. At age 16 I knew God was calling me "out" to full-time ministry leadership. *Though I didn't know where it would lead me "I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of God!"*

My friends thought I was crazy. They knew "the deacon's son" I was dating and knew he WASN'T called to ministry. He was four years my senior. But I KNEW I was called! Due to a "heart-breaking" scenario (he had an affair with a married woman at work) we broke up after my senior year and after he had asked me to marry him. Thank you, LORD. Obviously, I'm sad that he made such an ungodly, poor choice, but so very happy God had a man waiting "in the wings" that HE knew would become my life-mate. We will celebrate 40 years of marriage in January. I KNOW – I KNOW – we don't look that old. LOL

Though I was "called" to ministry I did not pursue college education. I grew up with a mom who never worked outside the home but beautifully took care of our family. But that reality caused me to box myself in – "I should follow in her steps." Though my parents loved me they never encouraged me to attend college or pursue the call of God on my life. From an adult perspective I realize it wasn't because they weren't FOR ME it was a "lack of understanding" on their part and a very small "worldview." My husband graduated from CBC and I received my PHT (Put Hubby Through.) We set our sails after graduation and were more than eager to get out in the world and guide as many people as possible to encounter and follow Jesus. We were ready to

win the world for Him. We served as Youth Pastors for two years in Nebraska. We loved every moment. We still have friends from that two-year experience. It was a WONDERFUL “first-place” to serve. My husband was called to lead/preach so we left NE and pastored our first church in Missouri. Then moved to KS to pastor in Paola and served six years there before he was elected to serve as DYD. During the YP and Lead Pastor role I served as an equal beside him. I thoroughly enjoyed ministry. Though I was called to ministry I found “my place” in an administrative role. I enjoy details. While in Paola, former Superintendents Derald and Peggy Musgrove, attended a Sunday morning Anniversary celebration. I had given oversight to the celebration activities. While with us she asked about it and upon discovering that I was the one behind the details she asked if I would serve on her District Women’s Team. I said yes, in that moment I had no idea how that response would change “my ministry.” Peggy began to speak life over me and draw out capacity in me that I had not tapped into. Her mentorship empowered me to dream about what I had to offer in ministry remaining alongside my husband but not always INTERTWINED with his calling. I found my voice. I started teaching more. Doors begin to open for me to speak. I obtained ministry credentials. I was elected as Women’s Ministries director for the state and led multiple world missions’ trips. I found energy in mentoring/coaching and empowering other women. What Peggy did for me changed the “vision of my calling” and I wanted to do that for women I knew had a calling on their life. It remains a passion to this day. After ten years as the state Women’s Director I presented an idea to the Presbytery board about launching a new department titled Network Development. I continue to lead that ministry and give direction to four initiatives: Crisis Assistance, Coaching, Community and Connection.

The struggles and triumphs:

TRIUMPHS:

- A front row seat to TRANSFORMED lives
- Speaking life over broken, hopeless people who found Jesus in their despair
- Youth pastor, Lead pastor, Network ministry
- Teaching and preaching in rural, urban, city contexts in KS, the nation and around the world
- Earning my Master’s degree from AGTS in 2014.  
Organizational Leadership with an emphasis in Coaching
- Watching our children grow up in a ministry home and now watching all three of them and their spouses serve in vocational ministry
- Working out my calling by maximizing my strengths and managing my weaknesses
- Mentoring and Coaching women called to ministry
- Giving oversight to “Space for Grace” an initiative for credentialed women to connect as peers
- Giving oversight to “UNFILTERED” an initiative that places a woman in ministry leadership who is serving in their first role with a seasoned woman in ministry

- Giving oversight to “ELEVATE” a ministry for the South-Central Region of the USA for women ministers.

#### STRUGGLES:

- Finding my voice
- Challenged with intimidation, comparisons, low self-esteem, inadequacies
- Wounds inflicted by others who called themselves Christians
- A toxic quest for perfectionism that led to severe burnout resulting in a six-month leave of absence from full-time ministry
- People who judge my or my husband’s decisions and deem them wrong without knowing all the facts
- At times feeling like I had hitched my wagon to my husband’s star and thereby feeling like I was robbed at times of “MY calling,” I had to work this out with a counselor. This was not something negative about my husband, rather it was an inner struggle to find ME and function in my own missional leadership.

What does a woman in ministry look like today?

- Whatever God has called her to do; she should pursue it wholeheartedly
- Strong women, Soft hearts
- Assertive and confident with humility
- Assured in her calling
- Empowered by nurturing a godly mindset
- The five-fold ministry (**Ephesians** 4:11), namely those of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (or "shepherds") and teachers, remain active and valid offices in the contemporary Christian Church for women and men

**Interview 3: Kerry Clarensau**  
**Conducted: January 23, 2019**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

North Texas District Women's Director and Coordinator of North Texas District Network of Women's Ministers. I am also an author, speaker and mentor.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

Navigating the many, ever-changing seasons of life and ministry responsibilities.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

The pushback from individuals who feel that women should not be in pastoral ministry.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I'm not sure, but perhaps they don't see many examples or perceive an abundance of opportunities for women in ministry.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

In many ways the Church is equipping all individuals—our Bible colleges and other training institutions have as many women as men students. These entities provide equal opportunities. However, the internship and open positions are not as plentiful for women.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

No answer given.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I don't think the majority of men consider the issue of women in pastoral ministry and most do very little to actively promote women in leadership positions.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I don't think the average women in the church or in the community thinks about this topic often. Women in ministry are aware of the issue and most would like to see more opportunities for women.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

The benefits are enormous—greater perspective, farther reach, deeper impact, and

simply more kingdom work accomplished.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

God has been so very gracious to me! I simply surrendered to the call, pursued an intimate relationship with Jesus, and then He did the rest. As I walked through the open doors of ministry opportunities, He has anointed and led each step of the way. Many opportunities seemed insignificant, but each one played a significant part in the next step on the journey. Being willing to serve in whatever capacity is needed at the moment, continues to provide numerous opportunities for ministry. It rarely looks like we think it will, and our ministry life changes with each new season. It is so important to cling tightly to HIM, but to hold loosely to ministry positions. We are the servant, He is the Master—it is His work not ours. I've never forced a door open or tried to make a place for myself—God is faithful to lead and guide as we stay humbly submitted to His will and purposes.

**Interview 3: Becca Goodwin**  
**Conducted: December 4, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

I currently work as a Therapist/Counselor for a non-profit organization called Christ First Counseling Center. Prior to my work as a Therapist, I served 7 years as a U.S. Assemblies of God Missionary with Chi Alpha Campus Ministries.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

I felt like my biggest challenge as a credentialed minister was my gender. I served the role of full time missionary while my husband worked a secular job. Often times, my experience at district/regional ministry events was unenjoyable. I found myself having to work harder than normal to make friends with other pastors who were the opposite sex. Our District Superintendent was very supportive of women in ministry, however, the non-verbal body language I experienced from other pastors made me feel isolated, lonely, and unwelcome.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Sexism/Racism. There is Biblical support for women to serve in ministry. The challenges I faced while serving in ministry had nothing to do with my integrity/character, it was my gender.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I think women do not receive the same level of validation/affirmation from others as do men, leaving them with a lack of emotional support. For most women, a lack of emotional support results in an insecure feeling.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

Overall, yes. However, it depends on what denomination that church affiliates with and the leadership (Senior Pastor) serving that church.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

We would need to start with a proper/accurate interpretation of scripture. Too often we pull scripture out of context to justify our thoughts/feelings. Proper Biblical interpretation of scripture points towards supporting women in ministry. This would be a starting point for all denominations that exclude the idea of women serving in ministry.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I believe some men see a lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem. I believe this depends on how they view women and the role of women in ministry.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Women who support the idea of women in ministry see the lack of women in pastoral ministry. Women with a different Biblical view of women in ministry probably do not see this as a problem.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Gender plays such a salient role in life. Men and Women were created equally but with different qualities and capabilities. Addressing certain topics could be better received from either a male or female. With the increase use of pornography, it is important to have accountability partners who are the same sex to help address sexual addictions. Men and Women can offer different/alternative perspectives, providing more than one approach to life.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

My husband and I pioneered a campus ministry on a secular college campus. It was the equivalent of church planting. We started out with three students and within three to four years, we grew to a group of 30+ students. Once again, my husband worked a full time secular job and I was the “Pastor” of our ministry. My husband was very supportive in every way he could be. In my ministry experience, I never had a student who voiced an issue with my gender. The campus we served was a state-funded university that despite having the space, was very difficult to work with. We started out meeting on campus the first two-three years of ministry. We found ourselves limited on where we could meet and what we could do on campus due to the university’s policies. I do not feel that my gender played any role in the university’s unwillingness to work with us. There were other religious organizations that had similar struggles as well. About this time, a fraternity had moved out of their building that was just across the street from campus. Not only was the location a prime location for a ministry center but this building offered us the potential to provide off-campus housing to students. We partnered with a local church and purchased the building allowing us the freedom to host events, small groups, weekly meetings, and offer housing at an affordable rate to students.

I quickly found myself becoming a landlord and having to make decisions that I had never made due to necessary remodeling in order to get our new building up to city code. Several jobs had to be contracted out and working with these businesses became a game. A lot of this work was done by men and often times I felt like I was being taken advantage of due to my gender. I had another pastor help me with certain projects and he was able to get affordable bids that did not include extra fees that I found on the bids I received. I remember spending my summer fundraising for our

new ministry center and had a difficult time procuring services. Meanwhile, my friend who was a pastor (male) had no trouble at all getting people on board to support our ministry financially. I found myself entertaining the thought “What am I doing wrong? Why was I having so much trouble raising support?”

As a U.S. Missionary, fundraising was a full time job. I was limited to raising support in our state unless a pastor from outside of our district invited me to come speak. There were other missionaries serving in the same role that I was who were men and seemed to not have any trouble procuring services. They also received invitations to speak at district events, allowing them to “advertise” their ministry. I had served in ministry longer than these other missionaries who were “just getting started” yet I was never asked to speak at events and repeatedly turned down from churches for support. I slowly found myself reaching a point in my life where I felt that I was not good enough. Maybe I had misunderstood God’s call for me? I was confused. We had a thriving ministry, students were hearing the Gospel for the first time, receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives. We had an international student from China who was agnostic, receive Jesus in his life at service one night. The following week he asked me if I would baptize him. Of course! After service, we piled in one of the bathrooms at our local ministry center and filled the bathtub with water. With twenty or so students crammed into a small space, I baptized a Chinese student who months before, did not know God existed. These were the things that I clung to when I would feel discouraged. There were a handful of pastors who I knew personally that were men who did their very best to help support me in any way they could. I was told by several others who had heard me speak that I was an “excellent communicator”. So again, why was I having trouble procuring services and why was I “ignored” at district events?

I remember attending a Light for The Lost banquet one year at my church. We found a table that other Chi Alpha Missionaries were setting at and sat down with them. As we sat down at our respective places, each setting had a placemat that had pictures of every missionary that was from our district. There we were. A picture of my husband and me under the heading “Chi Alpha Campus Ministries”. The keynote speaker was familiar to our district and should have known who I was. He championed our missionaries and called out the names of those who were attending the banquet for recognition. As he skimmed the crowd, he looked over me, calling for the missionary who was setting next to me to “stand up”. Did he not see me? I was embarrassed as I found myself the only one setting at our table while everyone else (except my husband) was standing up. As I continued to have experiences where clearly, favoritism was evidenced based on gender, I felt this feeling of defeat.

Four years into our ministry, a new level of stress was added. My husband and I started having children. Since my schedule was more flexible, I stayed home with our son. I was balancing between “full time missionary” and “full time new mom”. I found myself stretched thin, trying to do ministry and take care of a newborn baby. I was stressed and overwhelmed. I fought hard to try and get help with the ministry part of things, hoping I could delegate some responsibilities to student leaders. This



seemed to work for a while until our students got busy with exams and finals. I had less time to work on my messages. Even with childcare, I felt pulled in two different directions. Once again, that voice came back, reminding me “You aren’t good enough”. I felt like a failure as a pastor and as a mom. It was hard to not feel resentful towards others in ministry. Their wives stayed home with the children while they went out and did their thing. I, on the other hand, carried with my a baby carrier with an infant. My son went everywhere with me; campus, our ministry center, meetings, etc. I could only keep up the balancing act for so long. Eventually, I had to let go of certain ministry items. I had made myself available at all hours for students to reach me and I had stopped answering my phone after 10pm. Some respected this, some did not. I was a pastor, a landlord, and a mom. I did everything that was required to fill each respective role, but I was not able to do everything well.

Towards the end of my ministry experienced I felt the Lord move me to a new season of life. I had worked through a lot of my insecurities as a woman in ministry and found myself aspiring to work with others who struggled as well. I resigned from my ministry role and went back to school to earn a master’s degree in counseling. My favorite clients are those who are in ministry or volunteer full time in a church setting. Looking back at my ministry experience I do not regret nor, would I change anything. My reward is getting to see our students active in their local churches and living a missional life in the marketplace.

**Interview 4: Kristi Singer**  
**Conducted: November 6, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Women's ministries director, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

I come at this a bit from two perspectives. Tim and I were at a church in MO prior to moving back to KS that we really believed God had for us. There was dissension in the church and it didn't work out. There was a huge difference in that church (more suburban feeling) and "small town – old school" thinking of many rural areas. Finding my place. A place. Someone who believes enough in me to offer both my husband and me a paid position. Not taking me for granted – thinking I come with the package for free. The MO church was planning to hire me – initially to restructure their office and administrative processes. They knew after that, that I would move to a strictly pastoral role. The church we are currently pastoring, felt that they could use me for free. Needless to say, I'm only doing women's ministries and have nothing to do with office duties. I also found a full-time job outside of the church.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Belief systems. Tradition. Old ways of thinking. Scriptural misunderstandings. (Women are to remain silent. They are only allowed to preach/teach in the women or children's areas, etc.) Not only in the men's perspective – but women struggle with women pastors. I've heard many say that they wouldn't be comfortable attending a church with a woman pastor.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

They know they are up against a system/machine that is male dominant and uncomfortable with women in leadership. To be accepted (mainly in smaller communities) in a lead role would be very difficult. I don't know the statistics, but feel like ten out of ten times, a search committee would choose a resume from a man over a woman.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

I think we equip – we tell them what they need to know. As of yet, there are no required classes (at least not in the District SOMs and not sure about our Higher Ed. Providers) – required for both men and women that teach God's purpose of men *and* women in leadership.

During my time in seminary – (I was in the Women's Cohort at AGTS) – I took part in a class titled – Advanced Communication Skills for Women –... and right down the hall was a class of mainly men that was the same content, but titled "Advanced

Expository Preaching.” We actually had an in-depth conversation with our (male) professor about the inconsistencies.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

This is hard. It’s an educational issue. We have to teach/preach more on this issue. In all my life, I’ve never heard it preached/taught on. It’s a tradition issue. It’s something that has been so engrained in our culture that it’s hard to let go of the presuppositions from our past. It’s a pride issue. Men need to swallow their pride and be “okay” being led by a woman, and women must swallow their pride and quit playing the victim. (And quit always making it an issue. Aka – whining.) It’s going to take some strong men advocating for women in ministry. Unless God moves in a mind-blowing way – most men who are set in their thinking – will not change their thinking because a woman told them to.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Men live and work in a man’s world. They are comfortable – they have not experienced what women have experienced – so they are undereducated with what women face. I honestly believe that the majority of men don’t even think about this issue. (Unless their wife is a credentialed minister who talks about the issue.)

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I think women *ministers* see the issue. I think the majority of women don’t see it as an issue, because it’s been taught for so long that women are not to be in “authority” over men and a woman pastor would cross that line. Most women would view their pastor’s wife as their leader. As long as the pastor’s wife is fulfilling her role as a leader to the women, most women probably don’t think about the lack of women in pastoral ministry a problem.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Men and women *together* create the full picture of who God is. When men and women can serve together – we see the full character of God revealed. When men and women serve together in ministry, we get a picture of God’s original design for men and women. (Gen 1:27-28) We get a picture of what it means to be one in Christ – equal. (Gal 3:28)

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I’m keeping this short. My ministry has been a roller coaster. There were times when I felt very much on top of the mountain and times when I was at the bottom of the

deepest river in the lowest valley. I believe God is starting a new chapter in my ministry here at this new location – and it looks very different from what I had anticipated. Many dreams have been realized and even more lost. We are at a new place together now –The only hardest part of my story, is that I am back to work full-time (though definitely a ministry teaching 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade), I'm still not in “full-time occupational ministry” in a church, which is my heart's greatest desire.

**Interview 5: Emily Oakley**  
**Conducted: November 8, 2018**

**1. Current job title/ministry role?**

Credentialed minister, owner and founder of Rebirth Ministries, counselor.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

Overcoming the idea that I do not have to have a man in order to have a successful ministry. Who God has made me to be as a woman is enough even though I am not married. Also, that just because I am a woman, this does not mean I feel called to be in children's ministry.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Honestly, stigmas. While they are going away, a woman in ministry outside of a husband is hard for people to completely grasp (at least in my opinion).

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I believe it is because of fear. There might be a fear of not being taken seriously.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

As a whole, not always. There is not enough practical application to the Biblical understanding. Also, there needs to be more emphasis on the psychological aspects of dealing with people.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

For starters, putting them on boards and opening more positions for them to exhibit leadership skills.

**7. Do you think men see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I think it depends on the man. More and more men are seeing the need for women in ministry positions but some still allow the old traditions to shape their perspective. So, I think it depends on the man.

**8. Do you think women see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I also think it depends on the woman for the same reasons as the men. Millennials definitely see the need for women in pastoral ministry because of the ways our eyes are being opened. While I do not believe in the miscued views of feminism, women are seeing the strength other women have as well as the new lens they can bring to the table.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Men and women think differently and can therefore bring different perspectives to the table. Their different strengths can be exhibited.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I have been called into ministry since the age of 12. I assumed it was going to just be children's ministry (there is nothing wrong with women in children's ministry), but as I pursued God, I realized I was being called to start my own ministry. It's been hard to help people see that I do not need a man to be successful, and that the God in me is enough. Thankfully, I have been surrounded by unbelievably supportive people (both men and women) who believe that God can and does call anyone. Being a woman in ministry today means understanding the individual strengths both men and women bring and walking in the person God has created you to be...free of stigmas and fully equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Interview 6: Lacey Hartman**  
**Conducted: November 19, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Executive Pastor

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

My first leadership position was the Connections Director...My husband was the Youth Pastor and I had served with him on that team until I was hired full-time in the Connections role which covered next steps, events, groups, and guest follow up. I was in my early twenties and leading people 2-3x my age. I was too dominant at first trying to over compensate for my age and own personal insecurities. It took time to establish trust as well as for me to learn how to better communicate with adults than teens!

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

I think obstacles will vary depending on demographic of the church as well as the physical location of the church. I think the obstacle young women face is if they don't see women in leadership they won't step up or feel it is a possibility.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

If they haven't seen it modeled.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

I think it depends on the church. There are many churches now offering leadership colleges and I believe they are equally training women and men. In fact, I would assume more women as we are typically the first to take steps!

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

In every large church/network event that influences multiple churches/leaders, conference, etc having women be part of the speaker lineup, boards, and planning teams.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

My personal experience has been that men in my life have seen the opportunity for women and are trying to include them. I see the AG overall trying to include women more consistently in overall leadership. I do think we need to be careful not to strive for more women in leadership just because we are women, but for qualified women not be overlooked just because they are a woman.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Again, I think it depends on the context. I personally have seen women in leadership my whole life. However, I know there are certain settings/areas where that isn't the norm. I have seen a issue on a national level in some of our leadership, but they are taking strides.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Ultimately there is unity in diversity. God created us to work in tandem so when we do I believe we see a more clear, full expression of His plan.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I grew up in a home where I saw both of my parents actively growing in a relationship with Jesus. Not only did they live out their faith in our home, but they were also serving the local church. I saw both of my parents in leadership roles. They were pastors for the first few years of my life, but for the majority of my life have been in Network Leadership. The local church we attended had wonderful men and women in leadership as well. Our children's pastor was a woman and to this day I think she is the best kids pastor! She was constantly looking to develop leaders. I had my first leadership opportunity when I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade due to her leadership pipeline she created. (R.E.C. Crew Reach each child) My first youth pastor gave me an opportunity to be our youth worship leader. I wasn't extremely talented in voice or music, but he saw leadership potential and gave me that role when I was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and led that team for 3 years. In High School, another area youth pastor needed help developing a team so they asked me to drive an hour from my hometown to help them weekly for my last semester of High School. In college, I began serving as a youth leader. This consistent service led my new home church to eventually hire me as their Connections Director. I was the first woman, outside of the Pastor's Wife, to be on staff in a leadership role. Different men and women along the way have given me opportunities to lead, share, and learn! I am grateful!

I believe the stereotype of women in ministry is shifting. I remember growing up hearing multiple women joke that they didn't play the piano or sing so maybe they shouldn't be a pastor or a pastor's wife. Today, I see women leading in executive roles, worship, discipleship and more. I know there aren't as many lead pastors who are women, but I am not sure that is a lack of opportunity, a matter of calling, or a combination of both.



**Interview 7: Jada Morgan**  
**Conducted: December 12, 2018**

**0. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

I'm a church volunteer and still hold my license to preach with the AG.

**1. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

When I was single, that was the challenge. When I got married we were only married two months before I became pregnant. I was told I needed to focus on being a mom instead of ministry (by the pastor I interned under and submitted my first resume to for consideration of a youth pastor position). Now, I think the pastors I encounter are concerned that if we need to meet up for coffee, they'd feel awkward and it would be harder to coordinate than if they just hire a man.

**2. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

The obstacle I am still trying to overcome is that men in ministry don't know they are uncomfortable with the idea of women in ministry. They are good hearted people that are unsure how to navigate new territory. They are used to guys only and are unsure of what anything else looks like.

**3. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

They don't have many role models to look at, and they are told whether through words or lack of action that it is an uphill road.

**4. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

In my experience, the equipping is not the problem. Everyone is eager and willing to "groom" you for ministry. It's when the rubber hits the road and you submit your resume that you find out where you stand. For good or bad.

**5. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?** Understanding of egalitarian leadership is a change in mindset. When we begin to see people's callings instead of focusing on personal comfort zones, the person who is called to the job will be the person who gets the job.

**6. Do you think men see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?** I think that some do. I think that most don't. From my experience, if they hire a woman as a children's pastor they pat themselves on the back for being a free thinker. In all honesty, the men who could help me won't. The ones who see me and my calling don't have the position to help me.

**7. Do you think women see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

The women I have talked to see it as a major injustice and many (who don't even feel called to ministry) have a fire shut up in their bones about it!

**8. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Different strengths and weaknesses, different perspectives, different opinions, while having Biblical worldview also having different experiences that mold that world view. --Differences would be the main theme here--

**9. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I struggled with the call to ministry starting in high school. In college I continued to wrestle with it until the Lord clearly spoke to me. I was in my dorm room in a small private college in North Carolina and the Lord spoke to me saying "Now is a time of spiritual alignment. If you don't go (to Southeastern) now, you will always wonder what my perfect will was for your life." So I transferred. I believe that an integral part of that was meeting my husband through my would be brother in law. But the training I received for ministry was fulfilling and my GPA was the highest it had ever been. The students I mentored in practicum and during my internship are still connected to me today. It is a joy to see them live for God and have families of their own. I am still on a journey to start vocational ministry. In the seven and a half years since I graduated from undergrad (and two and a half years since graduating seminary), I have held one youth pastor position. I had to resign from that when moving to Missouri to pursue my M.Div. With each degree God told me the school and the degree to earn. He helped me with both and I believe in the calling he placed on my life. (Romans 11:29 is a source of encouragement) Right now my ministry outside of my family, is blogging and being an online source of encouragement, volunteering in my local church, one on one discipleship and mentoring. I continue to look for and apply to ministry positions. Sometimes I hear back, and most times I do not.

**Interview 8: Jenna Tuck**  
**Conducted: November 10, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Children's pastor.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

I think having people recognize that I am the pastor and I do have authority over my area of ministry in total, and not just over the kids I have in my ministry has been my biggest challenge.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

I think the biggest obstacle I have observed is for women who want to be in ministry in something other than children's ministry or possibly youth ministry. Many people seem to be ok with the idea of a woman being in charge, as long as it's in areas they are comfortable with them being in.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I think a big reason is because they don't think they have a chance of being hired to be in ministry full time. There are not a lot of women in full time ministry, and even less that are "in the spotlight." So when they think of being called into the ministry, it seems like something where they can't achieve anything larger than a small role where they would also have to take other jobs to support themselves.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

I think it depends. I have heard both sides where people have really come together to equip men and women to follow God's call. I have also heard of people being highly discouraged from following God call for their life. My experience has been very supportive, so my first inclination would be yes. But I know my experience is very different from a lot of others.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

I think it starts with people who are already in leadership positions taking a chance on both genders, and even seeking out the uncommon decisions for a job. Many people seek out people like themselves for a job position, especially when they will be working closely with them. I think intentionally looking for the uncommon person could help to create more equality.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Again, I think it depends on the person and where they are. I think many do not see the problem, not because they wouldn't think there was one, but because it's not something they think about or even see on a daily basis.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I think women see this as a problem partially because it means there are less opportunities for them to be a part of what God is doing in their families, friends, and communities. I also think sometimes women don't see the lack of women in ministry as a problem. I think that sometimes- just like men- they don't think it's a problem because they don't see these things on a daily basis.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

The Bible clearly says that God created us, both man and woman, in the image of God. When we are working together, we are fulfilling God's plan by using our strengths and allowing others to cover our weaknesses to advance His kingdom. I also believe that anytime anyone is working together for God's calling, we are benefiting from that.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

My ministry story has mostly been a positive one. I have been supported through my whole life with whatever God's calling was on my life. I still struggled with walking through God's call for my life because I wasn't sure what that would look like, but for the most part, it wasn't because of people's discouragement of being in ministry, just my own insecurities. Being in ministry has been an adjustment, even after growing up in ministry my whole life. However, I know that I wouldn't be happy or as fulfilled anywhere else because this is where God has placed me. I think being a woman in ministry has both its challenges and advantages. Being a woman in ministry means that sometimes, you have to work much harder to be seen as a leader. You also may have to work much harder to be placed in a job and be taken seriously. Many people will also doubt you much more than they would a man, just because of your gender. But as much as that is a struggle for many, I also think it has many advantages. The biggest advantage is that you can be a role model for so many who think it isn't possible for a woman to do great things for the kingdom of God.

**Interview 9: MacKenzie Witzke**  
**Conducted: November 8, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Youth Pastor.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

Answering this question as being a woman, and not the normal challenges that come from being a youth pastor of any gender, I would say few. But I tend to not pay much attention or give much thought to my gender within my roles in life. I can think of two instances. One was just words and there is no discrimination in their actions. I was on the pastoral search committee and a board member said, “We want a Pastor who has a wife. Not a Pastor who is married to another *female Pastor* like the last couple we had. I don’t believe in women being Pastors.” The room got quiet and slowly people began to politely agree that a wife who would be willing to be the secretary would be preferable. He is an important part of the church to this day and someone I respect greatly, and makes no actions that suggest he does not want me as the youth pastor. Another instance is more of a day-to-day challenge and one that I cannot tell if it is from my personality or related to my gender. In leadership meetings with particular people, my voice or opinion can easily be ignored. Attending board meetings and having a voice rarely gets me anywhere. Most of the time, because I have more luck, I give my husband an agenda with my concerns and he communicates them.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

I often get, “Well, Ryan is actually the Youth Pastor – right?” I think this lends to a greater problem that women in ministry is not something people are accustomed to and sometimes people are against it. Ministry is not a CEO position in a company where you can ramrod your way to the top and at the top you can run the company regardless of who dislikes/disrespects you. Ministry requires unity, community, support, etc. A woman who wants to be/feels called to be in leadership/pastoral roles within the church must find a church who would support that. While I do think there are many churches out there that believe women are also called to be in ministry, it is important that women apply for these positions openly stating their intention to lead. While the husband of the couple or a single man applying to be the pastor of a church would have to make no distinction that they wanted to lead, a woman would need to (in many cases) and should to avoid getting the wrong fit. In summary, the biggest obstacle in my opinion is getting into a church where as a woman, you are able to lead in a healthy way as God has called you to.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

Initially I did not pursue it because I did not think it was my place. I was (unhappily) happy to be the ‘Worship Pastor’s Wife’. It was our first Pastor that encouraged me that I had a role in this as well, however, he remained both the Pastor and the Youth

Pastor until he left. Culturally, many of the women who raised us, we see working in the children's wing of the church, the nursery, Sunday School, the cooking roles, the secretary roles. Perhaps more telling is that you rarely see the men who raised us in the children's roles, secretary roles, etc. Regardless of intention, young women growing up desiring to be in ministry, see these natural roles in action and begin to feel that is going to be their role as well. Of course, there are those that have seen women in pastoral/lead positions and their outlook is different. In my experience, talking with wives of male-lead youth pastors, they desire to get involved but are not sure of their place. However, many times this is not only due to gender roles but is also because the husband was a single youth pastor, got married, and the wife came on more as a 'visitor' to youth group. With a supportive vision, a husband could give opportunities to the wife (as she wanted them) equal to those he has in the ministry they serve.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

This is a tough question. I think that I believe that the church does provide equal opportunity but perhaps does not always promote that it is equal opportunity. On a district level, a man or woman can attend the same schooling/learning opportunities. The same applies to schooling opportunities in general – at University, programs, etc. I think where the church may fail to do this, is with encouragement from the mouth of humans. Pastors who represent the Church, may or may not support women in ministry, therefore women under that Pastor may not be aware of their opportunities. The only other big 'c' Church issue that comes to mind may be the content of Men's and Women's events/teachings/etc. Of course, I have never been to a Men's event/retreat/specific teaching but I have been to many Women's events. While these events often impact my life, they can be limiting the woman to learning and growing in 'female roles', solely. Of course, I have a strong personality and tend to not allow myself (knowingly) to be limited due to being a female.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

Everything rises and falls on leadership. If denominations, leaders, Pastors believe that women are Biblically right to lead in ministry, it needs to be stated. Intentional training and discussion on a local level would be beneficial. Additionally, to change things on a local level, women need to be incorporated on a district/national level. Also, proper interpretation of scripture is necessary. Practically speaking, men and women both can/should (called men and women, of course) perform the duties of pastor. Men and Women should equally share the Sunday pulpit, the worship stage, the administrative duties, the hospital visits, the leadership conferences, etc. Where called, women serving in up front roles would help change the perception. Of course, it makes no sense to have a woman up front who isn't called to be up front for the sake of changing the culture.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I think some men see the lack of women as a problem and some don't. I think if you are a man that has seen the skills of a called woman at work, then you desire to have women in ministry alongside you. For some men, it can be hard to have a woman alongside you and equal to you in ministry because it goes against the teaching that men are to be the head, and the lead alone. I don't think that this question can be answered staunchly one way or another, because all men will think differently. It comes down to previous teaching, realized culture, interpretation of scripture, and current and previous experience.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

My answer is similar here. Some women see this as a problem, while some do not. Those that see this as a problem either feel called, or know a woman who feels called, or interprets the Bible as promoting women in ministry. When these women see a lack of women in ministry, it raises questions and concern. However, with women who interpret scripture differently, succumb to typical gender roles, don't feel called to lead, etc. there is potential for them to think it is a problem *when* a woman is in ministry.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

My husband and I have benefited many times from doing ministry together, equally. As two individuals, of any gender, are better than one, scripture also says that man and woman are better together – helping one another navigate life. So it is not to say that the woman is needed for the sensitive moments and the male is needed for the disciplinary moments, but those roles could be reversed. Counseling is safer, more accountable, where a female and male lead can do this together. A ministry may be more balanced with both genders leading equally. More balanced in the genders of those attending, more balanced in the teaching, more balanced in the content in general. I suppose I don't have specifics, but just that balance would occur. God used women in the Bible to do many incredible things.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

My story's ups and downs will probably refer less to being a woman, and more to just being in ministry. Ryan was hired as the Worship Pastor in 2012 and I followed him. I wasn't angry or bitter or any other thing, I just followed him. We met with our first Pastor at a hospital in Wichita to visit someone who was very ill. In the elevator he asked me how I wanted to contribute, I was shy and wasn't sure. He asked if I would teach his Sunday School class and I reluctantly said yes. For the next year I taught that Sunday School class and helped him in youth group. We had a preaching team, there were four of us and we each took a week. A week after we got married and the day we were coming home from our honeymoon, our lead pastors called us and asked

us to come to over. Once we got there we found out that one spouse had in a way been unfaithful to the other and that because of this, they were going to step down and move back home to be with family and re-build their own. Immediately our whole church jumped in to support the church. During this time, I took the role of youth pastor. There was a preaching rotation on Sunday mornings, consisting of Godly men within the church. Six months into having no pastor we decided to begin looking, and after nine months we hired a pastor. When our pastor came on he kept all of the staff and most things remained the same. I continued to be the youth pastor, Ryan the worship pastor and so on. The struggles over the years have been lack of people willing to help, lack of support at times, the natural roller coaster ride of trying to make and maintain a successful ministry and the greatest of all, being bi-vocational. The victories outweigh the struggles. Over the years we have seen atheists come to know Christ during our atheism series, we have spent years upon years of time with the same students, doing life alongside them. We have seen students graduate and go on to do incredible things. We have been asked to speak to larger groups of students, smaller groups of students at student retreats and on Sunday mornings in “Big Church”. Through these times, God moves in the altar and reinforces the calling over our lives. Looking ahead, I would be honored to be in the city I am for the rest of my life. However, I know that is not God’s plan. I have moments where I get nervous about our future because I know that wherever and whenever we go, we will go as two pastors – one team. I get nervous that we will be turned away for this fact, because we will present ourselves as such. Then I am reminded that God goes before us and he will prepare the hearts of whomever to receive a male and female pastor/leader/missionary. I don’t consider my gender to be a hindrance. Instead, I figure I can help young women see that God values them all the same as their male peers. By living out God’s plan for my life, I break down every human misconception and in the end, that is how I think we ‘solve the problem’.



**Interview 10: Stacy Morse**  
**Conducted: November 9, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Chi Alpha Campus Co-director at Washburn University and oversee the 17th St Student Center, along with my amazing husband, also lead pastor's wife and credentialed minister.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

Balancing family and ministry while having to work outside ministry for income.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Men often do not fully affirm a woman's calling. Women need to balance priorities. Often paid positions on church staff are part-time or volunteer and often require the spouse to work another full time job for income and health care benefits.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

Often women have split responsibilities and priorities and often there is the expectations that she will serve along with her spouse, but there is not the salary and health care insurance.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

No, I feel that the Church needs to do more to equip young men and women.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

More examples of healthy team partnerships when both are serving and thriving together in ministry, training for church boards, support from district and national.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Honestly I don't think men see the lack of women in pastoral ministry, because although we say women are equally called to serve, men are often not affirming of women's calling, church boards are not trained, and pastors bivocational themselves and struggling. At Chi Alpha events I still see large majority of men leading breakouts.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I think women see more of a lack of women in pastoral ministry as they are often the ones looking for discipleship, counseling, and leadership opportunities. We are lacking healthy role models in ministry of women who are called and supported.

I was discipled in healthy AG church in Wisconsin, Christian Life, with a husband/wife co pastoring team. The church board was affirming of her calling and she preached on Sunday mornings half the time. As a new believer I was immediately discipled and mentored by her as she was on staff full time.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Both bring unique gifts, strengths, and talents to the table. Both have different styles of leadership. Serving together in ministry allows us to live in a healthy lifestyle of discipleship where we often have students in our home, counsel together, attend meetings and events, grow together spiritually, dream creatively together, share struggles and challenges, and Sabbath together.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I feel that I have found my calling serving in Chi Alpha with college students because I have a heart to disciple. One example of this would be our current house director, Kayden, who is currently a senior at Washburn University. She is a biology major and has the calling and talent to be a doctor. I met her when she was a shy timid freshman on campus and have had the privilege of discipling her for the past 3 ½ years. We have studied the Bible together weekly, learned how to hear from God, and struggled through fireworks every summer. When I shared with her I felt our family being called to be foster parents she encouraged me and rallied the students support. She is now leading a Bible study and discipling a freshman girl named Katie. I find the greatest joy in ministry seeing students disciple other students.

**Interview 11: Sondra Cave**  
**Conducted: November 25, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Co-Pastor...handle nearly all administrative details, run staff meetings, preach... I am also Women's Ministry director.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

I don't really feel like I've had any challenges as a woman in ministry. Bob, my husband, has always advocated for me to be in ministry. I have always functioned as co-pastor before I began receiving a stipend (which was only 3-4 years ago and it's not a lot). When I read about Pastor's wives struggles, or articles/blogs/facebook posts about women in ministry – I don't really connect to their complaints/struggles.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Sometimes I think the biggest obstacle for women are themselves. They have an inferiority complex and somehow think they don't deserve to pursue it... Granted, for as much progress has been made in ministry for women – and society – there are some men who are still in a superiority mindset toward women “being on their same level.” I am – personally - fully aware of some men in leadership in other denominations who have coveted a particular position of leadership in “the Church” – on several different levels – and have been vocal about NOT wanting a woman because they couldn't really say, “I don't want her to be considered because I want the title/job/position.” So – they do things that undermine the decision.

But women aren't confident in themselves and their abilities. I don't think they trust themselves. I think they think submission means losing their own voice and expression and letting others tell them what they can do with their call rather than staying true to what they know God has called them to do and trusting Him for the right opportunity to come - (and themselves that they are capable when the opportunity arises).

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

Some of what I said in question 3 – they won't be valued, recognized, seen as talented/equipped...

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

Depends on the leadership/Pastor of the local/district church. If the leadership supports women in ministry – they'll encourage that, set up opportunities, validate, and lead others to see the value of the women. If they leadership is still struggling with unconditional acceptance of women in ministry – there will be a struggle in equality of training.

I think our Christian universities are doing a fabulous job of creating space and opportunity for women to commit to a course of study toward ministry. I think those institutions empower women to major in/study for ministry just as they do both men/women majoring in business.

At the district level – using Kansas as an example – we’ve had a high number of women ordained into ministry in the last 4 years. As well as those receiving their certificate of ministry and license. And in the AG Kansas School of Ministry (AGKSOM) there are a lot of women enrolled in those courses.

I’m sure there are some very conservative churches/districts/pastors in which there is still some resistance toward women in ministry and inequality in training/mentoring of women who are called to ministry.

Bottom line – for me – I think it depends on the leadership at whatever level...denomination, district, local...and then your individual membership.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

I think it’s personal – some people have very strong beliefs about women in ministry, whether those folks are pastors, laypersons, district superintendents, etc. (See question 5). I think it depends on the leadership.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

No, because for most of them they have ‘always’ had a male pastor/youth pastor. They don’t really know any other way. There haven’t been a lot of women in pastoral roles until the last 10-12 years...it’s been a male-dominated profession.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Yes, because the progression of women toward ministry as a ‘job’/profession has been increasing. While many young ladies have likely felt called to ministry (my generation, for example) there wasn’t an acceptance to them being senior pastor, youth pastor – children’s pastor...GREAT! Of COURSE! Sunday school teacher, women’s ministry leader, small group...okay, no problem. For a woman to say “No, I’m submitting my resume for a senior/youth pastor position” wasn’t acceptable. And we’re to be submissive, and so we don’t assert ourselves and ‘stand our ground.’

Now that the numbers of women in ministry, being ordained and licensed are increasing, the recognition is coming so more and more are “coming out” with their call and asserting themselves. They are being placed in those positions of senior leadership, youth pastor, executive presbyters. One of my very closest friends is a General Superintendent in the Church of the Nazarene (they have 6 GS’s). More and more are being placed in position of leadership as President of seminaries and

Christian colleges/universities. So – I think today’s younger women see the gap and want to ‘make up’ for ‘years lost.’

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Different perspectives. Just as we are all called to different roles and responsibilities, to use whatever gifts we have been given, we have different ways of seeing life/relationships/ministry... women think differently. And I think – perhaps – the WHOLE family and all people in the congregation will be considered because men and women connect with different people groups.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I was born and raised in a pastor’s home. I’m a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Nazarene. My maternal grandfather was a pastor. On my dad’s side – there are 47 relatives (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> generation) who have made their living in ministry as pastor, evangelist, song evangelist, minister of music, missionary. I have 2 great aunts who were ordained ministers. So – I have ALWAYS been involved in some kind of ministry literally for my whole life.

When I was 9 years old, I was called to ministry as a missionary. We traveled a LOT when I was growing up – to visit my missionary cousins, and other countries, all across the US (I’ve been to 26 foreign countries and all 50 states). When I was 21, we went to Haiti. As the plane took off and I looked out the window over the country, I felt the Lord tell me my mission field wasn’t foreign, it was all around me wherever I was.

I majored in religion in college then changed my major to Psychology and Christian Education... I didn’t want to be a theologian and Christian education would let me do ‘safe’ ministry (children’s, or something but not pastor). I went on to get my teaching credential and masters degree in education and began teaching. When working on my doctorate – I realized that I had been/WAS ‘in ministry’ – it was just who I am. And everything about my life and philosophy of who I was and what I do was ministering to people and leading them toward being who God created them to be and fulfilling HIS call on their life... *whatever* that was. I didn’t HAVE to have a ‘position’ as pastor/youth pastor to “BE...IN...” ministry. I was called by God to be in ministry and so living my life day to day I was doing and being what I was called to do and be. No need to fight to BE in ministry, to be equal to men, to be recognized as a WOMAN in ministry... Kind of like “I’m a Christian business person” or “I’m a business person who is a Christian.” Same here – “I’m a woman in ministry” or “I’m living my life in ministry and I’m a woman.”

I don’t do well with women who try to make a point. Live your life with integrity and fulfilling God’s call on YOUR life for YOU and the point will be made and the opportunities will come. HE orders our steps.

My verse – “For we are His workmanship. He *planned* for me to do good works.” I don’t have to DO anything to BE His workmanship/masterpiece...I AM (we ARE). And he planned for me to do good things – so let’s get on with it. Don’t fight, just be... Other people might be surprised at the good [great] things I do, I might even be surprised at the doors that open for me, but HE is not!! HE PLANNED it that way – He’s just waiting for me to trust Him that I truly AM equipped with everything I need.

Be bold and courageous...I know the plans I have for you... *Why* do we fight, complain, struggle, feel insecure and inferior? Why put other people in charge of our self-esteem? Why listen to someone else try to be “god” and tell me what I can and can’t do in ministry. Have confidence in WHO you are and the gifts GOD, the CREATOR of the UNIVERSE, has given to you so you can honor Him with your life and what He’s planned and called you to do.

**Interview 12: Liz Bratcher**  
**Conducted: November 9, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Women's Pastor and Worship Pastor. Chi Alpha Missionary.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

Learning to balance my children and ministry (we have two toddlers), and always feeling torn between the two.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Honestly I feel like many women don't take a call the ministry seriously or think it only can happen if they marry a pastor, then aren't sure how to fill a role unless they sing and play piano or are in charge of kids ministry. There isn't much encouragement of women preaching or teaching or disciplining.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

See above answer.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

I'm not sure the church does much in either areas besides send kids to bible school. Sometimes I've seen intern programs but they seem to me as more grunt work then true discipleship and training.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

This is a difficult question to answer because as much as there are silly reasons for women not moving forward in ministry there is also the valid reason of wanting to focus on raising a family. Maybe more childcare options would be helpful. But also I think have more women guest speakers and greater discipleship happening.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Not always but I think some do. I think most are just used to mostly men and don't even think about it.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I think some of them do but again, I think many are just used to it and don't think anything of it until they experience some women in ministry and become more aware of it.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

God is more equally represented. Men learn more how women think. Women have an example to learn from and look up to. The women serving in the roles are more fulfilled because they're walking out their call.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I think what I'd like to share about is how being a woman in ministry is a constantly changing role. I went from being single doing ministry, to being married doing ministry together, to being pregnant (and super sick) and doing ministry, to having 1 kid and doing ministry, then having a toddler and being pregnant again, and still doing ministry, then having 2 kids and doing ministry. In each of those seasons "doing ministry" looked totally different. It's so hard. Every semester, sometimes every month, you're having to juggle, re-prioritize, weigh the cost, change your schedule, etc. I've been more involved, then less involved, then more involved, then way less involved, now more involved again, and it's been a stretching, hard process with each transition. No man deals with anything quite like this. There were moments I felt content with where God had me and moments I was frustrated with where I was. I questioned my identity at times and had to work through the fact that it's not in what I do, but in who I am in Christ. I've felt torn between ministry and family almost everyday since having kids. The only thing that has gotten me through is truly knowing I AM called to be a mom and do college ministry, and a supportive husband. I've had to wrestle with God many, many times about how He wants me to handle each season. It's been so hard! But so worth it.



**Interview 13: Jane Thurmon**  
**Conducted: November 26, 2018**

1. **What is your current job title/ministry role?**  
 Senior Pastor
2. **What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**  
 Realization that what others and even I may think makes no difference, if God has called, He will equip, provide and by His grace His purpose will prevail.
3. **While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**  
 The same obstacle all have in pursuing what God is calling them into...having faith and trust that where God leads He is faithful to sustain. Overcoming fear with faith is vital.
4. **Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**  
 Perhaps life responsibilities such as children, home, job etc, As natural born caretakers it can be difficult to pursue the call of ministry because of the impact upon family.
5. **Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**  
 I believe the AG does a great job in providing the same resources to both men and women to encourage and equip them for ministry.
6. **If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry? Men=Humbleness and acceptance Women=Courage to trust in God to take steps of faith no matter what others may think.**
7. **Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 I believe most men do not see that as a problem. Especially since the status quo has been a male dominated arena.
8. **Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 Women appreciate having leadership that has their perspective, however I'm not sure they consider the lack of women in ministry as a problem since traditionally those roles have been filled by men.
9. **What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

It brings balance and just as God made us man and women with each our own roles, so it is within ministry. Both men and women are needed to successfully complete the mission of the church.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

My biggest struggle was myself. I tell people that when others are not accepting of, I being a women in the role of a Senior Pastor, that's between them and God. Since it took me over a year to come to terms with it and fully accept what God was asking, how can I expect others who are struggling with women in ministry to automatically be accepting. Once I came to the realization that God has called me to this role and that all He asks on my part is faith, trust, and obedience and then He would take care of ALL the rest, it was though the fog lifted and there was clarity. You must have the assurance within yourself and confidence in the Lord to stand firmly where God has planted you. With this assurance and confidence in the Lord there is an ushering in of freedom from being concerned with what others may be thinking, because your only thought is "Lord, what's your will and may I clearly hear your voice to accomplish what you desire." Serving in a Pastoral role is such a blessing and I've been told that I share the heart of God's motherly side- love, compassion, mercy, nurturing, encouraging etc.. Not sure if I ever considered that our Heavenly Father has a "motherly" side, but our amazing God did create us both man and woman in His image. Which is the reason why I firmly believe it takes both men and women to have a healthy ministry. With eyes focused on Jesus, unity in the body comes to reality, the Spirit of God not only visits, but dwells and it is within the glory of God that we no longer come to the Heavenly throne as man or woman, but as a child of God!

**Interview 14: Marleen Stroud**  
**Conducted: November 18, 2018**

1. **What is your current job title/ministry role?**  
 Executive Administrative Assistant in the AGK Ministries Department.
2. **What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**  
 The balance of taking care of a family and home with the responsibilities of ministry as well.
3. **While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**  
 Maybe people viewing women not as “pastor” material?  
 Traditional roles of men typically being the lead pastors
4. **Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**  
 Having to deal with the pushback from those not welcoming women in ministry
5. **Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**  
 Yes, I feel it’s gotten better in this day and age. Both are given educational opportunities, ministry opportunities, internships, etc.... I feel if they are willing to serve, there will be plenty for them to do.
6. **If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**  
 Maybe start with the leadership modeling this equal partnership as well as educating and endorsing it.
7. **Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 Good question and hard to say. I would think it would only be a problem if it directly affected the male pastor.
8. **Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 I think women would see this more of a problem than men and probably more on their radar.
9. **What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**  
 I believe the Lord calls both men and women to serve in ministry. He equips them and grants talents and giftings to both according to His plan and purpose for their lives. I don’t think he is concerned with gender roles as much as He is with our hearts

and obedience. The beauty of both serving in ministry is how each can be effective in their sphere of influence. This can be as the pastor, small group leader, nursery coordinator, prayer team leader, media pastor, etc... Ministry can occur on so many levels.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I absolutely love being in ministry. Even with all the challenges and heartache we experience, it is what we have been called to do, so therefore, so fulfilling and rewarding. I feel so privileged the Lord would call me as such an early age. I did not know specifically what the Lord was calling me to do, other than just being willing to serve him wholeheartedly. With that as the start, He lead me to Bible College and ministry opportunities. As I look back and reflect, I see His hand leading and guiding me every step of the way. Once we got married, it was a natural “fit” of serving in ministry together. Yes, we had to figure it out and learn how with many mistakes made. We are still figuring it out after all these years! (haha! – slow learners).

Darin has very different giftings than I do and through the years, we have come to appreciate our differences. One of the unique opportunities that we have serving, is getting to see firsthand is ministry leaders serving in their own settings. It’s absolutely amazing to see God using both men and women, where He has placed them, what He is doing through them and the effectiveness of their ministry. Only God could do that! In looking at the examples in the Bible of women who served in ministry, it’s amazing the variety of opportunities given. How awesome it is that the Lord would give the privilege to willing, obedient hearts, no matter if it belonged to a man or woman.

**Interview 15: Shirley Fisher**  
**Conducted: December 10, 2018**

1. **What is your current job title/ministry role?**  
 Lead Pastor.
2. **What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**  
 Being taken seriously as a pastor who is a woman and not just a women's pastor. Not being included in the good ole boys club.
3. **While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**  
 Old line mindsets. Even our language always says "He" when talking about pastors.
4. **Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**  
 Lack of opportunities afforded to women in the lead positions. Even when there are opportunities to work on committees in the districts, it is very seldom, if at all, that a woman is asked to serve on any of these.
5. **Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**  
 Equipping as far as education, yes. Equipping as far as getting chosen to work it, not in lead Pastor positions. Youth, Children's, Women's positions, yes.
6. **If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?** Recognize those women who are fortunate enough to already be in lead positions, and utilize them in lead ways. I believe having lead women serve on district committees, you would be tapping into some great underutilized resources.
7. **Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 Not really, because until the mindsets get changed that even our verbage changes to He/She or they, instead of just "He" when talking about lead pastors, the minds will not change, especially in the upper leadership.
8. **Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 Yes, because the "call" is the "call". I am in a thriving small town church with men under my leadership, and they are being equipped for the kingdom. One will be working to get licensing when he is done getting his college degree. The call is not a gender call; it is a Godly call.
9. **What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Both sides have great resources and anointings and we need to be able to use those things to reach more people for the Kingdom. That's what's called "Being about the Father's business."

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I was a pastor's wife for many years. That position alone deserves respect. Especially since most of the time you are very underappreciated, and have over the top expectations put on you, and, you live with the Pastor!! LOL. But as a Lead Pastor, I have been in two churches and one is a great one to be in, and the other, not so much.

When my husband passed away, I was voted in as pastor. I think a few on the board thought I would not be a very hands on pastor and just let them do what they wanted to do. They soon found out that wasn't the case and fought me in a lot of ways. With continuing fasting and praying, God was able to lead me through all of that and I was successful at getting the church to a good place in spite of the great opposition. After a time of rest and grieving, God placed me where I am now. It has not been easy, but just like before, with a lot of prayer and fasting, the results have been a lot better. My church now is working in unity for the Kingdom, men and women are thriving and being equipped and utilizing their strengths and talents to grow this church. While our numbers have come up, their growth in the Lord is off the charts. I have no doubt that our numbers will continue to grow, but the most important growth must be in His word and the Holy Spirit. I believe that the people here see me as a Pastor and not a Woman Pastor, and they respect and honor that in many ways. I am also part of the ministerial alliance and I have the respect of the men on that alliance as well.

I love being a minister and can't imagine anything else making me feel complete and so blessed. My husband used to say, "The definition of a minister/pastor, is if you can do anything else and be happy doing it, you're not a minister/pastor." The drive in your heart that comes with the call from God is something that can't be satisfied with anything else but ministering for His Kingdom. That is not a gender drive; it is a holy drive. God is no respecter of person, and gives to whosoever will, and we should be the same. Don't just get out of the box; throw the box away!

**Interview 16: Megan Allen**  
**Conducted: November 7, 2018**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

I am the Administrative Assistant to the lead Pastor, Media Pastor, and Youth Pastor.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

I've had a particular leader above me telling me to be silent, my opinion isn't valued, being told "it would be best for me not to come to a particular meeting." This does not pertain to any current leaders, just men in the past. The "being told to be silent" has happened on various occasions with both leaders above and below me. I think the biggest challenge has been just blatant disregard for my opinion, suggestions, or presence. I think in some of these cases it was a mixture of both my gender and my age.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Support. Having people around her that will encourage her, remind her that it's the voice of the Lord she listens to, not the voice of man. I wholeheartedly believe I am in ministry because there were people around me who believed I could be. I don't think I would have made it here without the mentors in my life helping me see that the Lord could and would use me in this ministry role if that is what He was asking from me. The obstacle comes when mentors, family, friends, etc. are discouraging and resistant to woman taking a role in ministry.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I think there are a variety of reasons. The only thing I have seen is when women start families and then become a caregiver. Her ministry just changes and instead of being in a pulpit, her ministry becomes raising her children.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

From everything I have seen between my home church I grew up, my education at SAGU, the church I volunteered at while in college and then again working at my home church, I would say yes. I have a very small, narrow experience with this though.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

Again, from my small experience, I haven't seen it as a problem.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

In general, I would say no.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

In general, I would say no.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

We are all acutely aware that men and women were made different, think different, work differently, etc. I believe by men and women serving together in ministry you allow God to use all the strengths that He has given us.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

When I walked into ministry, I predicted I would have trouble with respect from men here and there because of my gender. What has surprised me has been the women I have ran into problems with. Especially single mothers. Because their son already has a lack of a male presence in their lives, single mothers have time and time again “benched” my involvement with their child because they believe I have nothing to offer. I’ve even been reprimanded by one because I taught on what it meant to be a Godly man. They believe I have no value as a leader in their students life because of my gender.

Throughout the 4 years I’ve had struggles here and there but mostly I have had an incredibly positive experience in ministry. I can remember being a sophomore in high school and driving with my mom down the road. I shared that maybe I would be a youth pastor one day, her reply was readily accepted by myself, “I don’t think anyone would hire you!” It was a passing thought and I was okay with it not being a possibility for me. Fast forward 8 years and I’m graduating with my degree in missions and unsure what the next step for me is. I end up getting hired on at my home church because I had a pastor believe I would be a good fit. I even had a board member fight for me to have a fair salary, saying something like, “She is educated, her salary needs to reflect it.” So from the very beginning of my job in the ministry the people I get the privilege of doing ministry believe in me and wanted to treat me fair.



**Interview 17: Kara Wilson**  
**Conducted: February 25, 2019**

1. **What is your current job title/ministry role?**  
 Youth Pastor.
2. **What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**  
 Sometimes being overlooked.
3. **While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**  
 The biggest obstacle is not to be overlooked for ministry experiences.
4. **Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**  
 They feel like they are not good enough or it's a "man's world."
5. **Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**  
 I think it depends on the church- yes, we as the church are supposed to equip both men and women but some churches are lacking in this area. And this could also be a reason a woman does not pursue ministry.
6. **If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**  
 Seeing leadership treat everyone equally would be a necessary element.
7. **Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 Sometimes not, because they are literally surrounded by their own gender in ministry and I don't think they see a problem. At events you see the majority men and a handful of women leaders. And if there is an open youth pastor position you might hear "I wonder who HE will be."
8. **Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 Yes, as I stated above just looking at the numbers of people at events you can see there is a problem just in youth ministry. I think some may see it in their churches where they minister, and in their district where they are located. You can't help but feel it and see it when you are a woman.
9. **What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

I there are so many benefits of ministering together! Men and women love differently, speak differently, minister differently, and do so many things differently that we can learn and help each other in ministry.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I've been a youth pastor for 6 years at Faith Family Life Centre. There has been ups and downs for sure. I've try to make it feel like a family atmosphere in this ministry and the kids say that's what it is.

Some triumphs in my ministry have been- seeing closer relationships with the Lord, The Lord setting a bisexual free, cutters being set free, the Lord setting a young man free from watching porn

Struggles in my ministry have been- depression, anxiety, stress has been a struggle for many, some of my kids have "know it all" syndrome and when that comes out, sometimes it tears me down(just totally being honest).

But I have the best kids in the world I feel like they are my kids since I don't have any of my own. Being a woman in ministry today, I love it! Yes it has its struggles. But some how I feel "empowered"- empowered to do gods work and empowered as a woman.

**Interview 18: Monica Mast**  
**Conducted: February 28, 2019**

**1. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Youth Pastor.

**2. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

One of my biggest challenges is trying to connect and relate with the young men in youth group and with being single its hard having a male leader that is available and wanting to help and connect with them.

**3. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

I think the stigma of what and who a pastor is. Growing up – I was taught that only men were Pastors and women were not to be in major leadership in a church. Also that being a wife/mother and a pastor can't coincide most of the times.

**4. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I think there is a lack of support. I know that I didn't have the support from a lot of my family that I wished I had. I also think we have a "woman's guilt" of what is expected of us by society and by our family and friends and it keeps us from going after the call on our lives.

**5. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

I think some churches do better than others. I keep thinking back to the church I grew up in and there I would have never been able to follow the calling that God placed on my life.

**6. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

I think helping to change the mindsets of people that believe women have no place in ministry is the first thing that comes my mind. Allowing young girls and women to dream about having a ministry career and I know that more needs to be and can be done – but don't have any ideas right now.

**7. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

From the conversations I have had with some – Yes they see the lack of women as a problem. As women we see the world differently and at times have more compassion for people. I think over the years men have begun to see the significance that we as women have in all areas of life – not just as the homemaker.

**8. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Yes – I know that through some of my hardest times I wanted a woman to speak with but there were none to be found. I think many women have things happening and going on but don't know who to speak to and a lot of men seem extremely intimidating.

**9. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Men and women have different strengths when it comes to ministry and interacting with people. Where one has a weakness, the other will have a strength. Our board meetings have begun to have the wives come to each meeting because our Pastors want and value their opinions. I always remember that God created us each differently and that with our differences we – men and women – make great teams when it comes to ministry.

**10. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

I always knew that I would be working with kids and always loved missions and have been on several trips. I went to Mexico in 2009 for an 8-month missions school and that is where I really found my calling. From Mexico I received an internship in Goodland KS. I ended up moving to Goodland in 2010. I started with working in kid's ministry and started school for credentials as well. Through the past 9 years I have worked/volunteered at the church and about 2 years ago was given the Youth Pastor title/position officially. One of my greatest struggles through the last 9 years has been to forget the comment of "You will never be hired as a youth pastor if you are single. No church wants a single female youth pastor" and not worry about what my family would think about my position. Luckily I have been blessed to be apart of a church where our lead Pastor believes and values women in ministry. One of the amazing things I have found through these years is that I can finally see who God created me to be and I'm okay with where He has me in all aspects in life. I have been able to watch the kids I taught in Kids ministry grow up and now am able to be their youth pastor. For me personally – I have seen how stepping into your calling brings healing and confidence along with so many other things as well, that I believe wouldn't have been there without stepping into this calling.

Being a women in ministry for me looks like a superhero and unstoppable. Just like it is always said – there is no power like a praying mother – there is no stopping a woman who has been called by God into ministry. She is able to balance all areas of her life and her life as a whole becomes a continuous ministry. No matter what she does.

**Interview 19: Christina Fall**  
**Conducted: March 4, 2019**

**2. What is your current job title/ministry role?**

Youth Pastor.

**3. What has been the biggest challenge for you as a woman in ministry?**

Not being a dude...lol. No I think it has been establishing authority in my relationships. I think we take the leadership and authority in marriage which has its place and it's awesome, but we put a giant blanket that applies to all women in all situations when it comes to ministry. We forget that Yaweh has given his call to either men and women whether we are married or single.

**4. While there has been much progress made for women in ministry, what do you see as the biggest obstacle women today have to overcome in order to pursue pastoral ministry?**

Again like I shared in the above question. I feel a lot of people down play the role and call women have from God, we have the stigma that were not really made to lead. The other part of what I think women might face today is right now in our culture is extreme feminism. I'm all for what we can do, but I see us losing our identity as women because were trying to focus on what our brothers in Christ are doing and competing with each other instead of celebrating the victory's God has graciously given us.

**5. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

I see it in myself a lot of the time. I have a low self-esteem and don't see me as God sees me. I think we struggle what we others think. And we don't have a world that builds us up, and a lot of the time we don't help each other with this problem. And our thoughts determine our feelings...even if our thoughts are lies they play our feelings so we back out or second guess what God is telling us.

**6. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has for their life?**

I feel the church today is much better at doing this at this day in age. There are many opportunities that I've found in my journey with Christ.

**7. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

To be honest I feel Christ coming back is the way to solve the problem... and obviously a lot of prayer. I've met many who despite the research despite what God says in his word they still think women shouldn't be in ministry or should be very limited in the roles they play. We just keep doing what we're already doing giving everyone the chance to step up and learning all they can on this side of heaven.

**8. Do you think *men* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Well from where I sit our church is very heavily lead by women. So I don't think our men see it that way. I've been blessed by our church where they have heavily encouraged us to pursue ministry.

**9. Do you think *women* see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

I'm sure we do. I think it also might stem from we have ideas and goals and sometimes we don't always align them with God or he has put a different spin on how we go about it and we look at it with blinders on and just see the problem instead of what God is actually doing. But thankfully from what I see and the events I've been to many Godly women have been used from the pulpit to bring the word.

**10. What are some of the many benefits of men and women serving equally together in ministry?**

Oh the benefits are freaking amazing!! When we work together for the goal of glorifying the kingdom!! Things happen God shows up and hears us. We also build our relationship with each other and the fellowship we gain is rewarding. When we achieve a goal together and people are saved, or a building budget is met or and missions trip is fully funded. We share those stories and they become a part of our testimony, which in turn glorifies God and his purposes.

**11. A big part of my research is just collecting stories of women in ministry. If you could tell the story of your ministry, what would it be? The struggles, the triumphs, etc. What does being a woman in ministry today look like?**

The biggest start to my ministry began when I ended up pregnant with my first child. I was not married at that time but we had been invited to church by old friends and ended up going. I had had encounter with God that first time we went. Later that day or the next day (it's been awhile) we were visiting a friend and I had to use the restroom. While I was just standing there reflecting on my life and new life that was coming God very clearly spoke to me "The life that you've had and the things you've done is not the life I have planned for your daughter"

I've never been the same since... We never stopped going to church even when it was hard and knowing we lived in sin when we first started out. I was blessed with a wonderful Pastor who saw potential in me and gave me opportunities to teach youth and help out. He was able to scholarship me through almost all of my AGKsom classes. I fell in love with learning Gods word and His people and the history we all have.

I want to be the same for others to give them a chance at what God is calling them to do. I think the hardest thing as a youth leader is getting a student to almost get that God has for them. You can see it in their face and their actions.... Then all of a sudden something happens either family or more often than not a boy/girlfriend grabs

their attention and they stop progressing. Sometimes they come back a round... but what often happens I eventually stop seeing them.

This one is a struggle and a triumph all in one, the students who get it and are hungry for God then they graduate and go off to college and do amazing things. The struggle is letting them go on their own and not being around them because you've grown to love them. Then at the same time the triumph is watching them step into ministry and grown into awesome young men and women.

Well the last question is a loaded one I feel... it depends on the day I think... but it looks promising if we are able to grasp that God has called us all and understand that everyone is stronger in different aspects in ministry and we all have a part we are really good at and if we invest in those things being intentional with what God wants for us then we can do so much more than what we can dream up.

**Interview 19: Anthony Navaratnam, Executive Pastor - Kansas  
Conducted: November 20, 2018**

- 1. How many women do you know in full-time *pastoral* ministry?**  
Three.
- 5. How many women in the AGK do you think serve in lead pastoral roles?**  
None.
- 6. Why do you think there are so few women in lead ministry roles?**  
Just because it has not been prioritized also an intentional effort not taken encourage and equip women to serve in this capacity.
- 7. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has on their life?**  
I think now there is a effort in the progressive churches but not enough.
- 8. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**  
The lack of support and encouragement from the leadership.
- 9. Do you see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
Yes since there is a huge population of females in our churches that need healthy pastoral ministry that a male pastor cannot provide them. Also there are qualified women that could be using their calling to reach the lost. The harvest is plentiful the workers are few.
- 10. Do you think most men see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
No they do not. Since this is not the norm. They do not see the missing piece. Creating awareness and education in this area will help with this problem. Also steps on how to encourage and promote women to consider ministry as an option.
- 11. What are some of the benefits you've seen when men and women serve equally together?**  
Healthy ministries. You get both perspectives (male and female). Stronger teams.
- 12. What are some of the challenges of building relationships with female pastors?**  
Men feeling uncomfortable to communicate personal struggles with females. The challenge of married men getting intimate with Female Pastoral staff. This is the same challenge for females with male pastors.
- 13. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**  
Education | Awareness | More females in leadership at the District level



**Interview 20: Kipp Wuellner, Youth Pastor - Kansas**  
**Conducted: November 29, 2018**

1. **How many women do you know in full-time *pastoral* ministry?**  
5.
2. **How many women in the AGK do you think serve in lead pastoral roles?**  
10.
3. **Why do you think there are so few women in lead ministry roles?**  
More are focused on their importance in the home and with raising their children.
4. **Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has on their life?**  
Yes, if there is an interest shown by either a boy or girl.
5. **Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**  
Desire to raise family, take care of home, Stereotypes of Men being pastors, enjoy being a support system in ministry.
6. **Do you see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
Not from my perspective there are many female leaders and pastors that co-pastor with their spouses. They are as important as any title. There is always a need for Woman to be in a pastoral role, whether it is full time or co-pastoring.
7. **Do you think most men see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
I would think most don't think about it. At least in my case I don't care if a pastor is male/female/black/white, I see all pastors as equals. So I don't pay attention to that detail.
8. **What are some of the benefits you've seen when men and women serve equally together?**  
There is a good balance of strengths balancing weaknesses when both genders are represented.
9. **What are some of the challenges of building relationships with female pastors?**  
Maintaining a close relationship but keeping gender boundaries. Not understanding emotional responses to problems.
10. **Do you think the girls in your youth group believe they can become pastors if God calls them to be?**  
I would say yes, but many don't consider it too much. It could come down to personality types.

**11. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

Maybe use more female ministers to travel to churches/youth groups to show that they are fully able to or capable of doing ministry.

Encourage young girls that seem to have a desire or calling to minister to start AGKSOM in high school to move in that direction.

**Interview 21: Cameron Combs, Youth Pastor - Kansas**  
**Conducted: November 29, 2018**

1. **How many women do you know in full-time *pastoral* ministry?**  
 Less than 5.
2. **How many women in the AGK do you think serve in lead pastoral roles?**  
 I can't think of any.
3. **Why do you think there are so few women in lead ministry roles?**  
 Perhaps, *traditionalism* (I love tradition, but detest *traditionalism*) has played a role, "We've always done it this way." There are also the challenges of prejudices a woman would face in being hired by church boards.
4. **Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has on their life?**  
 I don't. I think we tend to focus on young men who have decided to follow God's call in vocational ministry over young women, especially when it comes to pastoral ministry.
5. **Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**  
 Again, I think it is a lack of avenues provided by the local church. Another contributing factor would be the lack of role models for young women. I think most young women believe it would be *possible* to become a pastor, but perhaps they don't see it as *plausible* for the simple reason that it is hard to imagine would it would look like since there are very few examples they can actually see.
6. **Do you see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 Yes. First, the harvest is ripe and the laborers are few. The church is always in need of more laborers. Second, I believe that men and women are different (complementary to one another by God's design) and that it is precisely that difference that is needed in pastoral ministry. Third, I think it would be a beautiful example of the the practical implications of the gospel for the world to see "glass ceilings" shattered within the church. "There is no longer male nor female..." This would be a testament to the power the gospel has when it is properly applied to our life in the world.
7. **Do you think most men see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**  
 I don't want to speak for most men, but I would imagine that it does not cross their minds. For some it would simply be because they do not recognize that there is problem. For others I think there is some deeply held prejudices.
8. **What are some of the benefits you've seen when men and women serve equally together?**

Most importantly, in my view, I've seen the impact it's had on young women. When women and men serve equally together it opens new spaces for young women to imagine themselves serving in similar roles. I hate to keep harping on that, but I really do think that imagination is at the center of this. No one would ever verbally discourage a young woman from going into ministry, but the question is whether she can *see/imagine* herself in that role. Further, I think it is a humbling experience for men to work as equals with women, especially those who have long held biases.

**9. What are some of the challenges of building relationships with female pastors?**

Our culture is hyper-sexual and the female body is at the center of this. I believe this has an effect on how women are perceived in general. But specifically in building a relationship with a female pastor, I'd venture to guess that it is our hyper-sexualized culture that perhaps sees roadblocks where there aren't any. It is a romanticizing/sexualizing of all intimate relationships. (Hopefully this makes sense. I can elaborate more if you need me to.)

**10. Do you think the girls in your youth group believe they can become pastors if God calls them to be?**

I'm really not sure. Some, yes. Others, no. I think I could do a better job of emphasizing ministry as a viable vocation for all my students, especially girls.

**11. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

Equal pay; more equal representation of women at district and general council levels; explicit teaching on the matter at district and general council levels; encouraging of young women, especially through the means of tangible exemplars. These are just some things that come immediately to mind.

**Follow Up Question:**

**On the topic of why it can be difficult to build relationships with female pastors—can you expound a little more on that? Do you think it's mainly because we don't know how to have healthy relationships as men/women?**

To your follow-up question: I think that friendship (especially between men and women) is a lost art in culture. It just seems like you only have two approaches: the overly-cautious approach, which doesn't allow any sort of intimacy between friends or you have the hyper-sexualized approach to friendship. And I do think that it is because we don't know how. Again, it's not something we can easily conceive of in our imaginations. There aren't many good examples of intimate friendships between men and women (especially in the church).

**Interview 22: Michael Scott, Youth & Executive Pastor, Kansas  
Conducted: December 10, 2018**

**1. How many women do you know in full-time *pastoral* ministry?**

10-15... But most are from Bible College.

**2. How many women in the AGK do you think serve in lead pastoral roles?**

2?

**3. Why do you think there are so few women in lead ministry roles?**

Our society has been a male-dominated culture where men are seen as the workers and leaders while women handle domestic duties. This has started to shift in just the past couple decades, but turning the perception of gender roles, especially in the church, will take a long time.

**4. Do you think the Church does enough to equally equip young men and women to follow the call God has on their life?**

From what I have seen as a teenager and now church leader, any young man or woman who shows interest in following God's call gets pointed towards the right path, regardless of gender. Whether the church does enough to equip them overall to follow the call is a different question, but I have not seen an unequal equipping.

**5. Why do you think women who feel a call to ministry often do not pursue it?**

Especially as a single female, it is hard for them to get their foot in the door of ministry and be given a first ministry opportunity. So they might feel like they have to get married to pursue their calling, and when they do, they often feel like their vocation takes a backseat to their husband's.

**6. Do you see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

Yes. Churches are missing out on a crucial perspective that relates to half (or more than half) of their audience.

**7. Do you think most men see the lack of women in pastoral ministry as a problem? Why or why not?**

No. I would guess that most men haven't even thought of the problem of a lack of women in leadership.

**8. What are some of the benefits you've seen when men and women serve equally together?**

The church as a whole is better ministered to because the male and female needs and perspectives are being seen equally instead of males trying to figure out female needs. This leads to better planned events and ministries and an increased overall health in the church.

**9. What are some of the challenges of building relationships with female pastors?**

Because of scandals and accusations in churches, especially in the past couple decades, pastors have to be overly cautious about being alone with the opposite gender. Due to this, male pastors have to be very intentional about how they build a quality relationship with female pastors. Because intentionality involves extra thought and effort, most pastors would rather avoid the situation all together.

**10. Do you think the girls in your youth group believe they can become pastors if God calls them to be?**

I'd like to think so. What I've seen in our youth group is that girls called to ministry usually pursue the missionary route instead of pastoring.

**11. If we could solve this problem today, what would be some necessary elements that would contribute to men and women having a more equal partnership in ministry?**

Deliberate preaching about the importance of women following the call of God. Intentional hiring of female ministers and full time staff members to bring a female perspective in weekly meetings and event planning.

**Interview 23: Darin Stroud, Ministries Director for Kansas Assemblies of God  
Conducted: November 29, 2018**

**Working on some research for me thesis and wanted to ask you a question. My thesis topic is the role that conscious and unconscious gender bias plays in the advancement of women in ministry.**

**In many ways because of you, I've had opportunities that most other female youth pastors around the country wouldn't have (youth consultant, camp coordinator, speaker, etc.) As far as I know, before you added MacKenzie and me to the team, there weren't really a lot of female youth pastors who were highly involved in KYM (probably for many reasons, the main one being there haven't been many female youth pastors—especially full-time ones.) So my question is: What made you add us to the team?**

Personally, I have never had an issue with women in ministry and don't really care about gender or race like we hear so on. From ministry side, I look for character, competence, chemistry, and capacity in terms of bringing people on our team and who we like to work with. If they are male or female, whatever race, doesn't matter to me. As I have observed you personally, as well as Kenzie, I saw all those attributes in you as well as many others. You are a team player, well spoken, level-headed, mature, and so many other things. I felt, and feel, that you are such a quality leader that you bring so much to the table on the local level and would be a huge asset to KYM. I'm not a huge believer that we have to have a certain person who is younger, older, male, female, part-time, full-time and any other characteristic, but at the same time, I felt it was important when considering adding new team members, that we have female representation. That's why I chose you!

**If I can ask a couple of follow up questions—in the past, were there just no women who had those qualities? Why do you think there have been so few female youth pastors in the first place?**

Historically we haven't had that many female youth leaders. It has risen the last 5 years. Even less full-time. I would say primarily historically males responded to call. It has changed. More & more are saying yes & making themselves available.

**Interview 24: Rodney Wardwell, Pastor and Church Planter, Oklahoma  
Conducted: April 22, 2019**

**1. Are most church planters that you encounter male?**

The best that I can answer this would be from my own personal experience and not necessarily from a statistical answer. Yes, the majority of the planters I meet are either male or they are co-leading with their spouse. I would say that looking at the training events I attend that out of an average of 15-20 plants per event that 1 to 2 are female lead planters.

**2. From what you've seen, do women at CMN events (or other events) seem interested in being in a lead pastoral role in the first place?**

I think it varies from event to event and it completely depends on the specific woman. It appears that many of the women I meet at church planting events are happy to serve along side of their husband (who is the lead) or they like to co-lead. However, the women who are the lead planter are very confident leaders and know what they are supposed to do.

**3. Is it common for church planters to co-pastor with their spouse? How often do you think that occurs?**

Yes, it is becoming more and more common for couples to co-pastor. I would say that for every 5 plants we see come for coaching/training that 2-3 are couples who are looking to both share the leadership and speaking responsibilities.

**4. Do you think the process of church planting as a whole is female-friendly?**

I can't speak for planting as a whole, but I do think that the church planting process in the Assemblies of God is female-friendly and that CMN is making a concerted effort to empower women to plant even more. It needs to happen and not just because women need a voice, but because some of the women in our movement are our best leaders!

**5. Any other input/feedback you might have on women being involved in lead roles in church planting would be very appreciated! Thank you!!**

I think that what gets rewarded is what gets repeated and so I think highlighting women planters will help show other women that they too are capable of planting as much as men are. We are seeing the same thing with minorities as we champion those who are breaking the mold for their demographic as well. Let's face it, planting isn't for everyone. It takes a call of God on your life and a burden to see a plant through. If God has given someone that call and that dream, then I don't think it really matters your gender or skin tone. Go after it! You won't have peace until you do.