

*W*OMEN'S
MINISTRY
— *in the* —
LOCAL CHURCH

Leader's Guide

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1700 North Brown Road, Suite 102
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30043
Bookstore: 1-800-283-1357 or 678-825-1100
www.pcabookstore.com

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Women's Ministry in the Local Church

SESSION 1

Chapter One, The Story
Chapter Two, The Need
Chapter Three, The Motive

PREPARATION

1. Pray for each participant.
2. Make copies of the handout for each participant (handouts are at the end of the lesson plan). Suggest that participants keep the handout for future reference. You may want each participant to have a notebook.
3. Determine how much time you will spend on each section of the discussion and plan accordingly. It is important to work through the entire lesson and to allow time for the *Application* section. The material should be summarized, adjusted and adapted to your needs and time schedule.
4. If women in the group are not familiar with the principles of biblical womanhood, encourage them to read *The Legacy of Biblical Womanhood*.
5. *Training/Planning*: If this is a training/planning time for leaders, there are suggestions at the end of each lesson plan.
 - It is important for you to have an overview of the whole training plan, so look ahead at this section of each session. Each training time builds upon the previous one.
 - It is important for you to select the ideas that are applicable to your situation.
 - Once you have the overview, you will be better able to select the ideas that apply to your group.

OBJECTIVES

- To become more familiar with the material in chapters one through three by discussing it together.
- To consider how women can be life-givers or life-takers in the church.
- To determine the difference it will make if a women's ministry is guided by a desire to be helpers and life-givers.

If this is training/planning with leaders of the women's ministry:

- To evaluate the existing women's ministry.
- To introduce the umbrella model for designing a women's ministry.

Note: It is important to determine your specific objectives based on whether you are beginning a women's ministry, evaluating and strengthening an existing ministry, and/or training leaders for the ministry.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Part 1: Building Community

1. Page 16 in the text.

- Read the purpose and the five questions that the book will answer.
- Page 17. Read the first paragraph, "The subject of this book . . ." Then read Dr. Clowney's quote in the second paragraph, "If we lack interest..."
- This clearly sets the tone and direction of this study. This is a radical approach to women's ministry, but it is a biblical approach. We must pray for a consuming passion for the particular church where God has placed us and that must drive our interest in and commitment to any specific ministry within the church.

2. Refer to #1 on the handout and read the responsive reading.

- *Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible* note on Revelation 19:7: **wedding of the Lamb**. The wedding imagery expresses the intimacy, love and joy between Christ and his people. It consummates the commitments expressed earlier in Scripture (Isa. 54:5-8; Hos 2:19-20; Eph. 5:26-27).
- Ask: What are your thoughts about how much Jesus loves His church?

Part 2: Study/Discussion of Chapters One, Two and Three

Chapter One

1. Page 17, *Ligon's Story*. Ask: What are your reactions to the women who influenced Ligon Duncan?

2. Page 22, *Susan's Story*. Ask: What are the parallels to Susan's experience in women's ministry and the women's ministry in our church?

3. Page 25, *The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Discuss this material using one or more of the suggestions below.

- Refer to the information and ask for comments or questions.
- Ask volunteers to read each point.
- In advance, ask someone to go to the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood web site and to give a brief introduction to this ministry.
- Ask the pastor to cover this material for the group.

Chapter Two

1. Page 31. Discuss the three approaches to women's ministry listed at the beginning of this chapter.

- Ask: What are some weaknesses of these approaches?
- Conclude the discussion by reading the last paragraph, "A common weakness..."

2. Page 32, *Covenantal and Complementarian*

- Ask volunteers to summarize these two terms in their own words, or divide the participants into groups and ask them to write a summary statement of each term.
- If these are new concepts to the group, emphasize that the remainder of the study will continue to explain and expand on these ideas.

3. Page 33, *Why a Church Needs an Apologetic on Biblical Womanhood*

- An apologetic is a defense, or explanation, of what the Bible teaches on a topic.
- Ask: Why does a church need an apologetic on womanhood? (*Ideas: Refer to Appendix 1, page 157, the Rationale for the Danvers Statement. The same reasons that prompted this statement necessitate a strong statement on womanhood. Without a biblical apologetic, individuals and churches will absorb and adopt the cultural apologetic.*)
- Read the second paragraph, page 33: "The Triune God is a covenant-making..."
- Ask volunteers to read the verses on page 34 that refer to God as our Helper.
- Read the next paragraph: "When the man and woman sinned..."
- Go over the chart on page 35 and note the contrasts between the helper/life-giver and the hinderer/life-taker.

4. Page 35, *Foundational Principles of Biblical Womanhood*. Discuss this material using one or more of the suggestions below.

- This material is developed in chapters one through four of *The Legacy of Biblical Womanhood*. If any in the group have studied this book, ask them, in advance, to use these principles to write a summary statement of biblical womanhood.
- Read the principles and ask for questions or comments.
- Explain that these principles will continue to be expanded throughout the study.

5. Page 37, *Why a Church Needs a Women's Ministry*

- Emphasize that this section is written by a pastor. A women's ministry is not just an "organization" that women want. This is a vital part of the ministry of a local church.
- Read the first sentence of each of the five things Ligon says the church needs to do to promote a practical embrace of biblical womanhood in the congregation.

- Beginning on page 38, Ligon gives five reasons why a women's ministry is important in every healthy evangelical church. Ask volunteers to summarize each of the reasons, or divide the participants into groups, assign one of the reasons to each group, and ask them to write a summary statement in their own words.
- Ask: What are your observations about the importance Ligon gives to a women's ministry in the local church?

6. Page 43, the testimony at the end of the chapter. Ask: What are your responses to this pastor's testimony?

Chapter Three

1. Page 45, *The Sermon—Falling in Love with the Church*

- Read the first sentence, "The only reliable motive for encouraging...."
- Read or summarize the last paragraph in this section, "Without a proper esteem and love...."

2. Page 46, *Ecclesiology 101*

- Ask: What is ecclesiology?
- Ask: What are some benefits of a biblical ecclesiology?

3. Page 47, *First Timothy 3:14-16*

- Ask a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 3:14-16.
- Ligon gives three truths from this passage that give the foundation for a strong doctrine of the church and that have implications for the ministry of women in the church: the Bible, the church, and Christ.
- Ask volunteers to summarize each of these truths, or divide the participants into groups and assign each group one of the points to summarize.
- Read the final paragraph of the sermon, page 52: "Scripture calls us to things that are utterly...."

4. Refer to the testimony on page 52. Ask: How are you convicted and challenged by this testimony?

Part 3: Application for A Women's Ministry in the Church

1. Refer to number 2 on the handout. Divide the participants into pairs or groups and ask them to list five things they learned or things that were significant to them from chapters one through three. After a few minutes, ask each group to read their list.

2. Refer to number 3 on the handout. Discuss in small groups or with the group as a whole.
 - Following the discussion, ask: In this kind of situation, what difference will women's ecclesiology make in their reactions and responses? (*See the text, chapter three, page 46. Emphasize that our view of and commitment to the church will determine our reactions. When we remember that Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for her, that the church is His body and His bride, we will be motivated to maintain unity that will glorify Him rather than pursue self-interest that is divisive.*)
 - Refer to number 1 on the handout and note that Jesus prayed for our unity.
3. Refer to number 4 on the handout. Discuss in small groups or with the group as a whole. (*Ideas for the discussion: It may not make any difference in the tasks that the women's ministry does, but it will make a difference in the women's attitudes and motives. It should also make women intentional in seeking ways to support other ministries and in using the process of serving as an opportunity to spiritually mother other women.*)

TRAINING/PLANNING FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF A WOMEN'S MINISTRY

1. Use the *Application* discussion above to evaluate your current ministry.
 - This should be a short discussion. You will continue to evaluate in future sessions. The objective is to begin thinking biblically about the existing ministry.
 - The objective is not to be critical of the existing ministry but prayerfully evaluate the ministry in light of the biblical truths that have been presented in these chapters.
2. Introducing the umbrella model for evaluating and/or designing a women's ministry.
 - Refer to pp. 35-36: *Evaluating and Designing a Women's Ministry*. Read the suggestions for using the graphic. You will begin the process in this session and continue the process in the next sessions. In this session, use one of the following:
 - (1) If you have a women's ministry, ask the women to name the current activities and list them on the spokes of an umbrella. Then ask the women to prayerfully consider what activities should be deleted, added, or changed, and to be prepared to discuss this at the next session.
 - (2) If you are designing a new ministry, ask the women to list their initial thoughts regarding possible activities on the spokes of the umbrella. Ask them to prayerfully consider this before the next session. Give the women a blank umbrella and ask them to "design" the women's ministry they would like.
 - Encourage the women to think about what they have learned in chapters one through three as they consider what should be included on the umbrella.

3. Refer to the questions in number 4 on the handout. Explain that in order to know whether a women's ministry is being a helper and life-giver you need to gather some information. Refer to the *Strategies* section of the notebook and select ideas from the following.

- *Assessing Needs and Interests of Women*, pp. 37-39. You may want to make assignments and ask women to gather information that will help you evaluate and/or design your women's ministry.
- *Gathering Information from Elders and Deacons*, p. 40. You may want to assign a few women to contact the Elders and others to contact the Deacons to determine how the women's ministry can serve them.
- *Determining Opportunities for Ministries of Community and Compassion*, p. 41. You may want to make assignments to gather this information.