

“*Organic Ministry to Women* should be required reading for every woman involved in ministry to women in a church, campus, or mission context! Edwards and Mathews include solid, biblical support; insightful history on how ministry to women has gotten to where it is today; and very practical methodology. This is a robust organizational and leadership resource. If you are eager for effective ministry training, this book delivers essential guidance, direction, and wisdom.”

—Dr. Pamela MacRae
Professor of ministry to women, Moody Bible Institute

“I am a retired pastor of women with a longing heart to see women grow and thrive. Most ministry books identify the challenge and peel back the layers of that challenge. *Organic Ministry to Women: A Guide to Transformational Ministry with Next Generation Women* goes beyond and actually explains how to meet that challenge and develop a ministry that will grow each woman, and all women, into what God desires them to be. Paul advised Titus to find women who would share their lives and set an example. And here in the twenty-first century we are to do the same: Allow women to “pass through our hands and hearts” and emerge to do the same for others. I highly recommend *Organic Ministry to Women*. Don’t wait—get your copy now—it will transform your ministry and your life.”

—Dr. Cynthia Fantasia
Former pastor to women at Grace Chapel, Lexington, MA
Author of *In the Lingering Light: Courage and Hope for the Alzheimer’s Caregiver*

“As a mentor of young women both in the corporate world and the church, I’ve disciplined women in a variety of settings—the local coffee shop, the boardroom, my kitchen table, via video chat, and the typical Sunday school classroom. Except for the latter, how I minister looks nothing like how my grandmother did women’s ministry. The postmodern woman no longer fits into a simple, neat box. She juggles more than her predecessors and craves, even demands, authenticity. *Organic Ministry to Women* is a much-needed resource helping pastoral leaders transform their methods of discipleship from the ways of their youth to what’s relevant and needed for women today. When we, as pastoral leaders, realize we need to do the changing, we adopt the same attitude as the apostle Paul, ‘I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some’ (1 Cor. 9:22, NLT).”

—Karla D. Zazueta
Architect turned discipleship leader and blogger
Author of *Discipleship for Hispanic Introverts*
Contributing author to *Vindicating the Vixens*

“Ministry leaders eager to see the transformational power of Christ in the women they lead need this resource. *Organic Ministry to Women* is relevant and practical—creating the perfect balance of inspiration and how-tos.”

—Kat Armstrong,
Executive director of Polished Ministries (www.polishedonline.org)
Author of *No More Holding Back*

“This is such a needed resource for anyone involved in ministering to women! *Organic Ministry to Women* reminds us that the church is a unique sphere where women from Gen Z to the Greatest Generation engage. This book serves as a step-by-step instruction guide to unite women across ages and stages, especially as we work to include them all in our ministry. Through the Transformation Model, Sue Edwards and Kelley Mathews empower us to focus on Bible study and prayer as the bedrock of ministry. At the same time, they encourage us to seek new ways to engage women in our congregations. If our churches can inspire women to live out Titus 2:3–5, as Edwards and Mathews describe, a watching world will be drawn to the Jesus we love and serve.”

—Angela Cirocco
Minister to women, Northwest Bible Church, Dallas, TX

“A lot has changed over the past seventeen years since Sue Edwards and Kelley Mathews wrote their first book about ministry with women. *Organic Ministry to Women* addresses many of these changes in order to more effectively reach out and care for women in the twenty-first-century church, campus, and mission field. The book gives excellent insights into different generations and offers practical ways to bring together women of all ages. The distinctives of large and small churches make the book applicable for any size women’s ministry, and the profiles of different women emphasize that God uses all types of women to impact the world for Jesus Christ. Read this book and you, too, will be better equipped to make a difference in the lives of women.”

—Dr. Joye Baker
Adjunct professor of educational ministries and leadership, Dallas Theological Seminary

“Many women in the workplace today are frustrated with the reception they receive from leaders in ‘the church’ when God has gifted them with gifts of leadership. *Organic Ministry to Women: A Guide to Transformational Ministry with Next Generation Women* provides a wonderful Christlike mindset and roadmap for navigating these landmines, resulting in many people being introduced to Jesus through them as they follow God’s calling on their lives. While very practical, humorous stories inject vivid pictures as God helps these women’s ministry leaders through unexpected circumstances.”

—Diane Paddison
Founder and executive director, www.4wordwomen.org,
Author of *Work, Love, Pray* and *Be Refreshed: A Year of Devotions for Women in the Workplace*

Organic MINISTRY *to Women*

A Guide to Transformational Ministry
with Next Generation Women

SUE EDWARDS & KELLEY MATHEWS



Organic Ministry to Women: A Guide to Transformational Ministry with Next Generation Women

© 2019 by Sue Edwards and Kelley Mathews

Published by Kregel Ministry, an imprint of Kregel Publications, 2450 Oak Industrial Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-6020.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations in printed reviews.

Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

The Greek font, GraecaU, is available from www.linguistsoftware.com/lgku.htm, +1-425-775-1130.

Sample Bible Study in Appendix B taken from *James: Discovering God's Delight in a Lived-Out Faith*, The Discover Together Bible Study Series, by Sue Edwards, 2019, Kregel Publications (<https://www.discovertogetherseries.com>).

ISBN 978-0-8254-4615-3

Printed in the United States of America

19 20 21 22 23 / 5 4 3 2 1

To Natalie Edwards, Lindsay Ann Nickens, and Amanda Sherzer, who inspire in us great hope and confidence in the younger generation rising to take the reins of leadership with “integrity of heart” and “skillful hands” (Psalm 78:72).

CONTENTS

Foreword.....	9
Acknowledgments	13
Introduction.....	15
<i>A Woman of Influence—Jennie Allen</i> by Amanda Sherzer.....	23
Part 1: The Transformation Model and Why It's Working	
Chapter 1 Who Is the Postmodern Woman?.....	27
<i>A Woman of Influence—Roxy Hockensmith</i> by Amanda Sherzer.....	43
Chapter 2 What Is the Transformation Model?.....	45
Part 2: Taking the Transformation Model to the Church	
Chapter 3 Begin Right!	55
Chapter 4 Build Your Team.....	63
Chapter 5 Rally Your Team	79
Chapter 6 Create Your Own Life-Changing Bible Studies	87
<i>A Woman of Influence—Jen Wilkin</i> by Natalie Edwards.....	103
Chapter 7 Shape Your Study.....	105
<i>A Woman of Influence—Rebecca Carrell</i> by Lindsay Ann Nickens.....	117
Chapter 8 Feature Small Groups	119
<i>A Woman of Influence—Priscilla Shirer</i> by Natalie Edwards.....	129
Chapter 9 Romance the Postmodern Woman.....	131
<i>A Woman of Influence—Jackie Hill Perry</i> by Lindsay Ann Nickens.....	143

Chapter 10	Offer Exciting Events.....	145
Chapter 11	Add Other Ministries Wisely	157
	<i>A Woman of Influence—Julie Waters</i>	
	by Amanda Sherzer.....	165
Chapter 12	Prepare for and Survive Conflict	167
Chapter 13	Ministering with Men.....	173
	<i>A Woman of Influence—Dr. Pam MacRae</i>	
	by Natalie Edwards.....	183
Part 3: Taking the Transformation Model to the Campus		
Chapter 14	Who Needs a Campus Ministry?	187
	<i>A Woman of Influence—Dr. Karen Swallow Prior</i>	
	by Lindsay Ann Nickens.....	193
Chapter 15	Create Your Own Campus Women’s Ministry.....	195
	<i>A Woman of Influence—Dr. Sandra Glahn</i>	
	by Kelley Mathews.....	207
Part 4: Converting the Transformation Model Cross-Culturally		
Chapter 16	Strategies That Work Worldwide.....	211
	<i>A Woman of Influence—Kaley Harper</i>	
	by Amanda Sherzer.....	221
Chapter 17	Partner with Nationals.....	223
Appendix A	Sample Job Descriptions.....	239
Appendix B	Sample Bible Study Lesson	243
Appendix C	Training Guide for Small Group Leaders	255
Appendix D	Conflict Resolution Covenant.....	263
Appendix E	Women Student Fellowship Constitution	265
Endnotes	269

FOREWORD

Women's ministry in our local churches is changing. Since we wrote the first edition in 2002, new generations have stepped into shared leadership with older generations. This update will assist the church to be even more relevant and fruitful in ministry to women today.

—Sue and Kelley

I have had the incredible honor of serving alongside Dr. Sue Edwards for many years as colleagues at Dallas Theological Seminary and collaborators for the cause of Christ. Sue is a respected member of the seminary teaching faculty, who is loved by her coworkers and more importantly by her students. She is truly a masterful teacher and communicator in the classroom, who earns the respect of her students. Through her years of service at the seminary and in local churches, Sue has had the fantastic opportunity to influence an entire new generation of women leaders for the worldwide church. This book is one of the tools of that influence. The global church is richer because of Sue's impact.

One of those former students Sue influenced is Kelley Mathews, whom I have also known for many years. An excellent author and wordsmith in her own right, Kelley has helped others to fulfill their own dream of entering the publishing world by offering her editorial skills and guidance. Sue would be the first to tell you that she is a stronger writer because of Kelley's influence. Kelley continues to write actively to address the needs of her readers through her work with books, magazines, and blogs.

So putting these two women together on a book project like this is exciting. But why is a second edition needed? With this second edition, both Sue and Kelley are able to expand and explore the world women find themselves in today. A lot has changed in a very short time since the first edition came out. In our age of social media awareness campaigns, women's issues dominate many political discussions while churches and ministries are stumbling to address ethical crises in biblical and respectful ways. Local

churches and parachurch ministries cannot afford to ignore our ministry to women and with women. More than ever, churches and ministries need equipped godly women not on the sidelines but on the front lines.

Christian organizations are only truly healthy when both men and women have opportunities to learn, grow, and serve together. Ministering to the women in our midst is not a “fluffy luxury” for only the privileged few, or a “second-class” afterthought on the activities calendar. Healthy, biblical ministries to women and with women are foundational to the work of the gospel. My prayer is that this book will help to equip Christian leaders like yourself in leading life-changing ministry that is both relevant and biblically grounded. We cannot afford half-hearted effort or allow any of our women to fall through the cracks. The work is just too important.

And now, a word to my brothers in Christ: If you are picking up this book, good for you! The secular, unbelieving world watches how we treat our sisters in Christ. One of the greatest witnesses we have as believers is the love and respect we show one another. So to you who serve in leadership roles in local churches and parachurch ministries, make it a priority to give the women leaders in your midst the resources, respect, and support they need. Reading this book is a great first step to understanding the needs of women in your church or ministry settings.

—DR. GEORGE M. HILLMAN JR.,
vice president of student life, dean of students,
professor of educational ministries and leadership,
Dallas Theological Seminary

While various forms of women’s ministry have existed for decades, especially in denominational churches, fewer of the present forms effectively reach the next generation because they appear irrelevant to the issues and needs of women today. To reach a new generation we, with a heart for women, must be open to change, flexing in our methods while firmly holding to the center, the Word of God.

This book contains a concise and clear explanation of the differences between the modern and the postmodern women of our culture. It also introduces the Transformation Model, which addresses and adapts to the needs of the postmodern woman, as a solution. However, Sue and Kelley

maintain a fine balance between the necessity to minister to the needs of young women while not neglecting the valuable resource found in older women. These experienced, mature women must be encouraged to obey the Titus 2:3–5 command to be the mentors and role models for the generations following them.

The importance of their emphasis that the teaching of Scripture must be the core focus of any ministry cannot be overestimated. Without consistent Bible teaching with application to women's lives, spiritual growth will not be constant. Every other activity finds its source in this focus. Consequently, the relationships that develop among women are not shallow and superficial, but are genuinely caring and nurturing.

Since Sue ministered in a large church and Kelley in a small one, they offer valuable insights on how these new methods can be adapted to churches of any size. They are practical and honest in describing their own experiences and the methods and activities they've tried. Some were successful; some were not. This knowledge gives the book credibility you can trust. It has been forged from years of experience.

The scope of the book is not limited to the local church. Ideas on starting ministries on college campuses, both Christian and secular, are given. An excellent chapter on using the model cross-culturally will be very useful in creatively planning a missions outreach.

This book is a valuable resource for anyone involved in women's ministries, whether it's a church, campus, or missions program, and even for those ministering one-on-one. I'm happy to recommend it as an essential ministry tool for communicating the Word of God and building life-sustaining relationships.

—VICKIE KRAFT

minister to women, Northwest Bible Church (1985–1998)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There is a sense in which no gift is ours until we have thanked the giver. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for you are the greatest Giver of all.

Sue Edwards:

To David, my husband of forty-eight years, “*the wind beneath my wings.*” Without your encouragement, flexibility, unselfishness, and expertise with the computer, this book would not exist. To our daughters Heather and Rachel, for lighting our world as we watched you grow into beautiful women inside and out. To Tom and Matt, for loving them the way we do and for being God’s men. And thanks for a new generation of joy, grandchildren Becca, Luke, Caleb, Will, and Seth. And finally, to my grandmother who gave me my first glimpse of God.

Thanks, Kelley, for sharing your writing skills, your fine mind, and your heart for women on this project. God brought us together and I could not have orchestrated a better team. Your flexibility and maturity beyond your years made working with you a joy every step of the way. And thanks for the computer shortcuts you taught me. You can teach an old dog new tricks!

Kelley Mathews:

To the women whom God has used to mold my character and faith, and to the women who have found this book useful for ministry over the years: Thank you for investing in and participating with me as we have served God. My deepest thanks to Sue for partnering so generously for more than a decade; to Sandra Glahn for training, mentoring, and cheering me on; and to my family for supporting my writing career in all its ups and downs.

A hearty thanks from both of us to Natalie Edwards (no relation to Sue), Lindsay Ann Nickens, and Amanda Sherzer for their insight and contributions interviewing and writing the “Women of Influence” profiles.

Information about the authors:

SUE EDWARDS (DMIN, GORDON-CONWELL) spent several decades overseeing women's ministries in large evangelical churches. Today she joyfully invests in men and women at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) as professor of educational ministries and leadership. She loves writing Bible studies and teaching the Bible. The author of The Discover Together Bible Study series (discovertogetherseries.com), she has been married to David for over forty-eight years and they are the parents of two daughters, Heather and Rachel, and grandparents to five. She and David live in the Dallas area with their two Westies, Quigley and Emma Jane.

Sue is a founding member of the Association of Women in Ministry Professions, an organization that promotes personal and professional growth in their members, all serving as women's ministry directors, pastors, consultants, educators, writers, and trainers. For information on AWMP, visit www.awmp.org.

KELLEY MATHEWS (THM, DALLAS SEMINARY) wrote the first version of this book as a new mother. Now, she and her husband of twenty-plus years have three sons and a daughter.

When the kids were small, she spent several years leading a small church women's ministry. She currently writes and edits in the Christian book market, also judging fiction for the Christy Awards and writing reviews for *Publishers Weekly*. Although she and Sue enjoy different life stages, they share the same passion: to see women won, grown, and unleashed for God's glory. They bring different perspectives that benefit a variety of readers.

INTRODUCTION

Women's gatherings feel cheesy—like a big flashy production. They don't draw us closer to Jesus or each other. Honestly, I think that's why most women my age aren't coming anymore. Can we try something different? My friends and I have some fresh ideas.

Ministry to women is changing. We hear these kinds of comments from women in their twenties, thirties, and even forties, as they partner with older women in churches and parachurch ministries to create new methods that work for all generations today. Some of the desired changes are warranted and would likely result in women maturing into spiritually healthy, all-in Christ-followers. Others could lead us down dangerous roads toward generations of biblically illiterate women, a devastating consequence of good intentions but flawed foresight. We wrote this book to help women leaders assess and implement needed changes in effective ministry to women, and to avoid grievous consequences that loom ahead if we miss the mark.

WE ALL NEED JESUS

Twenty-eight years old, attractive, and earning \$95,000 a year writing software, Amy was estranged from her mother, never knew her father, and recently ended a four-year relationship with a live-in boyfriend. A coworker deposited her in my office with a plea: “Help her. She’s missed two weeks of work and she can’t stop crying.”

As I (Sue) looked into Amy’s swollen eyes, I saw myself thirty years earlier and remembered the hopelessness. But God had provided a spiritual mother named Kathy Hyde who nursed me back to health by introducing me to Jesus and re-parenting me as I learned to lean on him. Their love transformed me. When I reflect on the difference Jesus has made in my life over the past half-century, gratitude overwhelms me.

Now I am the spiritual mother. But will the same methods and models used to help me work for Amy? Yes and no. Amy and I were both in our

twenties when we turned to Christ for help. We shared the same fundamental need—an intimate relationship with Jesus. We needed to know the Bible, to enjoy being part of his family. We needed women to model what a godly woman looked like. We needed a push to risk ministering to others in a way that complemented our design and gifts. Our needs may have been the same, but what worked for me thirty years ago will *not* work for Amy. Why? Amy is a postmodern woman.

What does that mean? Kelley and I wrote this book to answer that question, and to show you how to include Amy in your ministry.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Part 1: The Transformation Model and Why It's Working

Part 1 characterizes the postmodern woman to help you understand her mindset. You must know who she is before you can reach her. The term “postmodern” characterizes the worldview of generations labeled Gen X (1965–1979), Millennial (1980–1994), and Gen Z (1995–early 2000s). But be cautious that you don't exclude any generation as you attempt to woo one specific group. We'll address these issues and show you how to minimize the pitfalls.

We also introduce you to the Transformation Model. This model meets the needs of today's women, both modern and postmodern. We will examine seven pillars of the model that work whether you minister in the church, on campuses, or around the world. In part 1, we examine this model in general terms. Later, in parts 2, 3, and 4, we'll adapt these pillars and principles to specific areas of ministry.

Part 2: Taking the Transformation Model to the Church

In part 2, we'll examine what's happening in the church and how to apply the Transformation Model there. More and more women are assuming leadership roles in the church. Initially churches and parachurch ministries hired women to lead children or women. But when supervisors observed the excellent gifts, abilities, and work ethics of many of these women, they opened doors for them to lead all kinds of other ministries. Today you are more likely to find women serving in a wide variety of positions.

Church leaders have come to understand the Titus 2 mandate that women are responsible for the spiritual growth of the women in their churches. Women attend staff meetings and enjoy their place on the team. More churches pay their women what men in comparable positions make. Some still do not.

Women in smaller churches observe the exciting ministries in the mega-churches and struggle to attain the same effectiveness despite their lack of resources. Most small churches cannot afford to bring on staff a minister/pastor to women (or any other assistant pastor position), so women labor as lay ministers with hopes that their pastors value their work, trusting that they are doing what they can with what they have.

Whether you already serve on staff or as a lay minister, these principles will help you build a ministry that works today. We will show you how to implement these ideas in your setting, both small and large churches. One size does not fit all, but the same principles apply everywhere.

Part 3: Taking the Transformation Model to the Campus

Part 3 takes the Transformation Model to the campus, where women of all ages desire training. Colleges, universities, and seminaries are packed with women preparing for ministry.¹ Wherever women congregate they want to connect. But the exclusive sorority model grates against Christ's ways. Women are instituting different organizations on campuses that will address the specific needs of women there. Discover these and explore how to begin a ministry to women on your campus.

Part 4: Converting the Transformation Model Cross-Culturally

Finally, in part 4, we will take the Transformation Model to the mission field. Is it applicable to other cultures? Absolutely! But missionaries must tweak these principles to fit the culture and contexts where they serve.

For centuries women missionaries blazed trails in other lands. They evangelized, planted churches, taught, and worked in medicine. Today they continue their noble labor. But now women also teach nationals how to minister to their women. Whether on short-term trips or long-term commitments, women equip their sisters around the world. We'll look at cross-cultural strategies that work today.

In Addition . . .

We'll share stories of women influencers in various ministry contexts. You will benefit from their varied experiences and accrued wisdom. We hope you will find inspiration from one or more of them as you pursue your own ministry. Whether you have years invested in women's lives or you hear a faint call and want to explore the possibilities, this book can help.

But before we examine the multifaceted world of women's ministry in the new millennium, let's take a look at where we've been.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Models of Women's Ministry in America

Women have ministered to one another through the centuries, but most of that ministry occurred informally. From the frontier days until the mid-1900s, women formed the heart of communities around the country. They visited over the fence while hanging out their laundry, birthed each other's babies, kept watch over the neighborhood or town children—no matter whose they were. Before our culture dismantled the nuclear family, women cooked, canned, and cried together. They trained the younger women by example.

Many women grew up in church. The Ten Commandments hung on the walls of every classroom and the Lord's Prayer began the school day. Please don't misunderstand. This was not the golden age for women. They often felt the brunt of prejudice and opportunities were limited. But sisterhood flourished and women were seldom alone.

In the mid- to late 1800s various models of women's ministry emerged that took on the flavor of the times. Here is what they looked like.

The Tea Party Model

Women gathered for social events and activities. They drank tea and enjoyed each other's company. At these gatherings, women were expected to behave with proper etiquette and propriety. Such opportunities provided excellent training for younger women, who learned social graces, and gave everyone a chance to show off that new hat.

Today, younger women still love to gather, but seldom for fashion shows or mother-daughter banquets. Instead you'll find them laughing

and lounging on one another's sofas discussing streaming entertainment or working together in a food pantry. They love community but reject social events and activities that promote what they see as a false happy-church-face or "putting on airs." They value authenticity.

The Social Activism Model

Christian women of the nineteenth century valued service. The mid-1800s saw the rise of voluntary associations designed by and for women, dedicated to the betterment of American society. We will use two still-existing movements to illustrate this model.

As rural America gave way to the Industrial Revolution and the urban experience, women found themselves thrust into unfamiliar and sometimes dangerous territory on college campuses, in the factories, and on the streets. They needed support, training, and a place of refuge. In 1858, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) began providing boardinghouses for young working women, political lobbying for better working conditions and equal protection under the law (remember: women could not vote until the 1920s), and a variety of recreational activities for these young women living away from home. The YWCA gave women an opportunity to serve other women on a broader social stage.

In 1874, women concerned about the destructive power of alcohol founded the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). They met in churches to pray, and then marched to the saloons to ask the owners to close their establishments. Women drove the push to make Prohibition law. But behind the WCTU's temperance reform was "protection of the home." Through education and example, the women of WCTU hoped to encourage total abstinence from alcohol, and later, tobacco and recreational drugs. Today, the WCTU remains active in the fight against drug and alcohol abuse.

These organizations, and others like them, arose out of a biblically-based concern for the welfare of women and families. The founding women had a knowledge of Christ and the Bible. Postmodern women rarely have that foundation of faith. However, younger women today tend to value social justice and community activism like their nineteenth-century ancestors. If you want younger women to join you, you'll need to include community

and social activism opportunities because these women expect to live out what they learn in the Scriptures.

The Missions Model

Until the 1980s, women called by God served on the foreign mission field because they found few meaningful opportunities to serve God in American churches. As a result, churches designed programs to learn about women missionaries and support them. Today, however, the comprehensive reach of media enables women to embrace a global perspective even in their faith. Many desire to help women around the world, but they also need to heal before they can focus on others.

While women's ministries must foster a global perspective, missions should serve as an arm, not the core, of every women's ministry. We cannot help others until we are healed ourselves. But watch out—when today's woman experiences healing, she doesn't just want to learn about missions. She wants to *do* missions.

The Parachurch Bible Study Model

Women love to study the Bible. But because churches did not provide the opportunity, Bible studies outside the church began to flourish in the 1950s. Bible Study Fellowship and other Bible classes exploded, attracting women from all denominations and backgrounds. I (Sue) came to Christ in a parachurch Bible study. The teacher became my spiritual mother, and she taught me to teach the Bible. I served as a teaching leader and teacher trainer in Dallas-based Bible Discussion Groups, Inc. for more than fifteen years and considered this ministry my spiritual home. More than my church, it nourished, fed, and challenged me.

These parachurch studies provide valuable equipping opportunities for women in churches without women's ministries. But churches are meant to serve women more holistically. For within the church, as we teach and help women mature, we walk with them in a variety of other arenas. We give women varied opportunities to use their gifts in the service of the body of Christ. We partner with other ministries. We participate in God's key instrument on earth—the church.

The One-Size-Fits-All Model

Churches used to schedule women's activities and Bible studies during the day. The vast majority of women were married and stayed home, even after their children grew up and moved away. Not so today. Now over half of women are single (53.2 percent in 2016),² and almost 60 percent work full or part time.³

America has been described as a "melting pot" where different races, nationalities, and genders are expected to conform and think alike. Women in church today don't resemble a melting pot. They look more like a green salad. They look and think differently. They like to be distinct. Many enjoy variety and request to be with women of different ages and stages.

The 2010 census found 13.1 million households headed by single women. Three out of five children in the United States are in childcare.⁴ What are the demographics in your church?

Women ministering in the new millennium serve every woman or they neglect their call. That complicates everything we do. As a result, we change our meeting times and formats to honor working women's schedules. Teachers learn to use illustrations that aren't always about the stay-at-home mom with 2.2 children. We intentionally remember singles. Our workshops address issues besides training toddlers and surviving teens. No longer does one size fit all in the church, but variety adds zest and spice to our work. The challenge can be a blessing if we choose to see it that way.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE JUST READ?

As you contemplate the different models, do you observe any that dominate your ministry? Most women's ministries today can identify with aspects of each model.

But the overall flavor of your ministry should no longer reflect any of these outdated models. In our churches, we changed gradually, as the church was also transitioning. Change can be a painful process. Approach it with wisdom and a gentle spirit. The sign on our missions minister's door read, "Blessed are the flexible for they will not get bent out of shape." If you tend toward inflexibility, we suggest any of these:

William Bridges, *Managing Transitions, Make the Most of Change*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1993.

Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*. New York: Broadway Books, 2010.

John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

Keep in step with your supervisors, but remember that God may call *you* to point the way. Although change brings challenges, we have found God faithful when we knew he was leading us. Get on your knees, and if you are sure, enact change with God's blessing and strength. Remember: your changing may win women to Christ for eternity. And that's the bottom line.

A Woman of Influence
JENNIE ALLEN

by Amanda Sherzer

Jennie Allen's passion for making disciples began soon after she surrendered her life to Christ at age seventeen. She remembers, "I came home from Kanakuk Kamp filled with the Spirit and started teaching the Bible to younger high school girls."

She knew early on God was calling her to ministry, but she had no idea how this calling would play out. She simply had an innate "fire to give God away" to women. She taught her Bible in dorms and living rooms and invested in those God placed in front of her.

Reflecting on the audacious ways God has used her over the years, Jennie shares, "I fell into everything." He created unexpected avenues for her to make more disciples through writing books and Bible studies, teaching Scripture worldwide, and founding IF:Gathering, a movement inspired by her question: *If God is real . . . then what?*

IF is comprised of women who long for their lives to make an eternal difference. Jennie explained, "We don't want to just say, 'Yes, God is real.' We want to come together as a generation and live out what he has called us to do." At the center of IF stands discipleship, the way Jennie and her team believe God will change the world and reconcile it to himself. IF's staff, interns, and thousands of local leaders provide women with resources and events to help them learn more about God and how to disciple others in their spheres. These efforts have resonated mightily. Since IF's launch in 2013, it has reached more than one million people in 179 countries.

Jennie never expected IF to explode so quickly. She readily admits she and her team did not have intricate strategies or marketing plans when they began; they built IF through surrender and obedience to God. They worked hard and trusted as he guided them through the little and the big. "We prayed for God to lead, and we followed him the best we could, one step at a time."

Jennie credits the Holy Spirit for IF's effectiveness as he has reached and ministered to its wide audience through its gatherings and tools. She also knows IF would not have flourished without the army of people who work alongside her. "We're not meant to do this alone. I'm such a big believer in the body of Christ."

She advises women to likewise link arms with other Christ-followers. "If you start a Bible study—even if it's seven people—ask a friend to help." She also urges leaders to chase service rather than perfection, seeking to please God instead of living in fear of messing up before man. "Women don't have to prove themselves to others," she says.

Jennie observes how some people believe they need an official ministry job to make an impact for God. She counters, "We make it too complicated! The pursuit of souls is not a 'profession.' You don't need a title. We're *all* called to pour our lives into ministry. We're *all* called to make disciples."

Jennie Allen graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary in 2005 with a master's in biblical studies. She is the author of the best-selling books *Anything*, *Restless*, and *Nothing to Prove*, and the Bible studies *Stuck*, *Chase*, *Restless*, and *Proven*. The founder and visionary of IF:Gathering, Jennie lives in Dallas, Texas, with her husband, Zac, and their four children.

PART I

THE TRANSFORMATION MODEL AND WHY IT'S WORKING

Chapter 1

WHO IS THE POSTMODERN WOMAN?

The phenomenon of the generation gap reaches beyond familial relationships—mothers and daughters, grandfathers and grandsons—into the church body. Older women, content with their traditional, didactic method of Bible study, sometimes feel confused or threatened by the younger generation’s desire for a more organic approach, creativity, diversity, and spontaneity. “We know our way works—why change it?” they wonder. Older women sometimes ask me (Sue), “What in the world do these younger women mean by *organic*?” Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) adjunct professor Barbara Neumann explains the concept well in our book *Organic Mentoring*.

The organic movement started as a means to produce natural food but eventually grew into a belief system, one that is embraced by many next generation people. Organic elements shape their values and lifestyles in many ways. This belief system leads young people to a simpler, more natural and authentic way of life. It moves away from outside control, artificial ingredients, and synthetic products.

When we understand that the organic belief system also extends to the way Postmoderns relate to others, we begin to *get* them. Their relationships unfold naturally according to their own timetables. When we talked candidly with young women in our research, they all wished the mentoring process could be more “organic.” When they look at the way we traditionally structure mentoring, they don’t see organic. They see layers of additives that make the process feel unnatural. (*Organic Men-*

toring, A Mentor's Guide to Relationships with Next Generation Women, Sue Edwards and Barbara Neumann, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014, pp. 97, 98)

Younger and middle-aged women observe their mothers and grandmothers in church and say, “Boring! That is *not* for me.” They walk away from relevant truth because they can't relate to an antiquated method. Many postmoderns believe they have little in common with the moderns—an unfortunate and potentially destructive misconception.

These labels don't fit each individual. Many women in their sixties think like postmodern women. And young women who grew up in Christian homes often take on the attributes of modern women. But for the sake of our discussion, these labels work. They help us as we search for methods to bring the generations together.

DO YOUR METHODS REACH THE POSTMODERN WOMAN?

Many postmoderns view life from a different perspective than moderns—yet many women attempting ministry use obsolete methods that won't work with young women. Highly structured formats, academic Bible teaching without application, and simplistic thinking don't interest the digital generations. These women seek authentic relationships and “spirituality,” but not packaged in yesterday's styles.

The postmodern woman wants transformation. She wants genuine relationships and deep spiritual experiences. She demands we address the complexities of life and refuses to settle for pat answers and superficial explanations, insisting that we take off our masks and get real. She wants substantial change—a new life that works.

Many hurt deeply and fear trusting anyone. These are the daughters of radical feminism. They come to the church searching for authentic community and family.

Many call several women “mom” and several men “dad.” Adults played musical chairs in their lives, so they learned independence for survival. They experienced the emptiness of isolation and are desperate to connect. And so they come to Jesus. We must seriously consider their needs as we plan our ministries. But we must understand the challenges as we seek to woo and win them.

BE ALERT TO THE CHALLENGES

Don't Marginalize or Unnecessarily Offend Moderns

Imagine the results if we changed our methods to attract young women but lost the older women in the process. Our challenge is to embrace the postmodern woman while retaining the generations of women who came before her. Why? Because these earlier generations are our army of spiritual mothers. They will teach and train the younger women God is sending us. They will enfold postmoderns when the leaders run out of arms. Only a fool would fashion a ministry to the needs of one generation and forget the other.

Don't Capitulate to the Culture

Aspects of both modern and postmodern cultures fly in the face of biblical truth. For example, typical postmoderns believe truth is relative. Secular education is founded on that premise, affecting every academic discipline. But the Bible teaches absolute truth. In our attempts to attract postmoderns, should we abandon teaching absolute truth because they resist? Absolutely not. That would be capitulating to postmodern culture.

But we can teach biblical truth using methods that appeal to postmoderns. How? By using more stories, images, and art—and by making the main points of our messages applicational rather than academic. Postmoderns aren't impressed that we can conjugate Greek verbs. First, they want to know if our faith works.

Modernism also contradicts Scripture. For example, in the past, relationships and families have been sacrificed on the altar of modernity's materialism. Dr. Alice Mathews, former Lois W. Bennett Associate Professor of Educational and Women's Ministries at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, comments:

Having done some useful course work and a lot of reading in my Ph.D. studies on postmodernism, I see many great dangers in modernism as well as in postmodernism. So I see myself as a "pre-modern" woman living in the midst of the ongoing assumptions of modernity and almost welcoming postmodernism as a way of forcing Christians to see how much we've bought into the culture of modernity in community-destroying ways. No, I am

not postmodern. But nothing less than postmodern thought could force us to question the tenets of modernity which are in the air we breathe. I know that I bought into modernity for the first six decades of my life, and only in the last decade I have come to see how that ethos, modernity, has been at odds with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵

Do you consider the needs of postmodern women in your ministry? If not, is it time for a change? But be careful not to capitulate to either culture or unnecessarily offend either group as you do.

AWAKEN TO THE NEED FOR CHANGE

To answer my calling I (Sue) have been forced to change. Why? Because it's not about me—it's about them!

I will never forget attending a women's ministry conference at Multnomah Bible College and Seminary in Portland, Oregon. Before me sat a panel of Christian women, all under thirty, most of whom studied in the women's ministry track. Several had grown up in Christian homes and the others came to Christ through youth ministry or in their early twenties. I listened intently as they answered questions that revealed a different worldview than mine. One raised in a Christian home expressed that she felt disenfranchised from her generation. But she also looked at the world differently from her mother. She felt caught between two worlds. Others identified with their generation and talked about their struggle to see life "biblically." Each one challenged us to understand them and their lost generation.

A modern woman once asked me, "Why should I change? Why can't the postmoderns change instead?" Former Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) student Amy Joy Warner has an answer.

For the Christian, Jesus Christ offers the ultimate example for approaching the postmodern culture. John, in his Gospel, clearly illuminates Jesus's method when he writes, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (1:14). In Jesus Christ, God approached humanity in terms it could understand. In doing so, God established a pattern for those who would

follow after Christ. God's incarnation creates the necessity and appropriateness of a postmodern approach to Christian ministry. If we are to follow his example, we have no excuse for not accommodating ourselves to the postmodern culture in such a way that Christ is evident once again.

The postmodern women at the conference came to faith because someone reached out to them in terms they could understand. I left the conference knowing God was calling me to change the way I approached women's ministry.

IS JESUS ASKING YOU TO CHANGE?

We need a different model because traditional models, as we have shown, don't reach the postmodern world in which we now live. God loves this world and asks us to woo them to him. Jesus's last words on earth are still our chief concern.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19–20)

God calls us to reach all nations, all peoples, all generations. As God brings these postmodern women into our churches, Titus 2:3–5 serves as the foundational text for ministry to women.

Background

After Paul planted churches, normally he left disciples behind to shepherd the new flocks. In Crete, Paul left Titus and continued to mentor him through correspondence. One of his letters included instructions to various groups. He wrote specifically concerning women:

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love

their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (Titus 2:3–5)

Identify “Mature” Women

First, Titus needed to identify “older” women and delegate the care of other women in the church to them. The Greek word for “older” denotes the idea of being “advanced in the process.” In contrast, “younger” women carries with it the idea of being recent, or early, new in the process. These terms don’t necessarily mean chronological age but can also relate to spiritual age. This is important because younger women mature in Christ qualify for leadership. Paul was advising Titus to delegate and prepare spiritually mature women to shepherd other women.

Cretan women rarely enjoyed educational opportunities, but Paul instructed Titus to disregard this cultural norm, to find women who distinguished themselves by their love for the Lord, and to prepare them to minister to other women.

Paul’s letter to Titus expressed real urgency. In 2:1, he insisted, “You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.” The health and survival of the church depended on equipping its people, including women, and on growing both strong men and strong women, enabling them to persevere in the midst of a hostile Cretan environment. Paul’s words were not a suggestion but a command. Churches today include many fine ministries that are not specifically commanded in Scripture. Ministry to women, however, is mentioned clearly.

Titus’s Temporary Role

Titus’s role included priming the pump for women, getting the ministry off the ground. After Titus identified and equipped these “older” women, they would be ready to teach, train, and mentor the generation behind them. Imagine if Paul’s mandate had been common practice in all churches since the first century!

Paul provided guidelines to help Titus know how to identify women advanced in the process. Who is a Titus 2 woman? What core qualities did Paul elevate that we still need to value today? Of course, no woman reflects

these values perfectly, but she should be seeking these attributes and should have achieved a measure of maturity before she's trusted to lead others. Also, women who seriously desire to prepare themselves for effective ministry must intentionally develop these qualities.

Three Qualifications for Ministering to Women

First, Paul advised Titus to find women who were “reverent in the way they live.” We must live out our love for the Lord as a lifestyle, a real walk with God, no masks—what you see in public reflects who you are in private.

Next, Paul focused on two key negatives. The first: “not to be slanderers.” Do you struggle to overcome a loose tongue? Proverbs 13:3 instructs, “Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.”

Don't be like the woman who backed into another car. She wrote a note and put it under the windshield wiper of the damaged car that read, “*I have just smashed your car. The people who saw the accident are watching me. They think I am writing down my name and address. They are wrong.*”

Only women who habitually use truthful, honest, wise words qualify for ministry. Our words play a mammoth part in our effectiveness in ministry and our legacy. Slanderers let a loose tongue do its damage, talking too much, gossiping, failing to keep a confidence. In ministry, you will be privy to secrets that can ruin other people's lives. The Greek word for slander carries the meaning of joining the work of the devil to undermine and destroy. If we slander others, we sow discord and discredit ourselves. It's an integrity issue, one of your most prized possessions. So take this admonition seriously and get a good grip on your tongue.

Paul also insisted that a Titus 2 woman not be “addicted to much wine.” Obviously, this prohibits the overuse of alcohol, but it also represents a much broader problem then and now—addictions and distractions of all kinds. What helps women escape pain? Examples include food, technology, shopping, unhealthy romantic and sexual relationships, perfectionism, exercise, and prescription drugs. In extremes, these issues are idols, and we'll battle these idols until Jesus returns. But when women learn God's Word together, love one another well, pray for each other, and hold one another accountable, these addictions and distractions lose their power.

The Two Key Elements of a Transformational Ministry to Women

Next, the text reveals two core elements. What are we supposed to do to help one another grow up in Jesus? A Titus 2 ministry to women must run on two separate tracks.

First, it must include gifted women teachers called to teach “what is good” (Titus 2:3). Paul uses the Greek term for a formal teacher, one who infuses other women with sound, healthy instruction. This word described rabbis and doctors, people who healed or taught truth and practical wisdom. God calls some of us to formally teach, proclaim, and herald the Word of God. We teach with humility in the sense of this C. S. Lewis quote: “Think of me as fellow patient in the same hospital who having been admitted a little earlier could give some advice.”⁶

Paul alerts us to a second priority when he says in verse 4, “Then they can train . . .” The Greek word for train does not denote formal teaching, but rather the cultivation of common sense or wisdom, skill in living. We need an army of women, advanced in the process, to come alongside others as mentors, coaches, and spiritual advisors to model an authentic Christian life.

Training can be one-on-one or in a group. It's life-on-life, everyday practical skills to help us navigate this difficult world. A hundred years ago, many women grew up in Christian homes surrounded by large extended families. They mentored one another naturally, but few experience this today. We need more intentional mentoring cultures where these kinds of interactions naturally occur.

But to make this reality, we need intergenerational interaction in our ministries. We need touch points to bring together women of different ages. Titus 2 assumes this dynamic, and in ancient churches it naturally happened, but today many of our churches seldom facilitate intergenerational interaction in meaningful ways. To intentionally create ministries that reflect the truths in Titus 2, consider reading Sue and Barbara Neumann's book, *Organic Mentoring: A Mentor's Guide to Relationships with Next Generation Women* (Kregel, 2014).

Topics to Teach

In verses 4 and 5, Paul provides a list of topics to teach, important then and now. However, in Crete most women were married, often as young

teens in arranged marriages. Today women need a wider curriculum. Many women remain single longer or permanently, and a large percentage work outside the home. These women also need biblical literacy and life skills for today's world. We minister to a much more diverse group of women than Titus did.

Expected Result

Verse 5 says we live out Titus 2:3–5, “so that no one will malign the word of God.” Malign means to speak evil of or give false reports. Do people malign the Bible today? Absolutely. We don't know exactly how this works, but when people see biblically literate Christian women living out what they know, serving with integrity in their families, workplaces, and communities, and raising up one another, somehow, God is glorified and Jesus looks good.

HOW DO MODERNS VIEW THE WORLD?

Both modernism and postmodernism strive to make meaning of the cultural, economic, political, and social changes taking place in art, architecture, literature, the social sciences, popular culture, industry, business, technology, and education. Modernism is committed to logic, reason, and the scientific method and assumes that these are the tools that lead to truth and reality. Modernists have long believed that the scientific method is capable of producing solutions to the problems of the world and that there are no limits to where the search for truth may lead.

They equate change with progress and believe that democracy leads to freedom, equality, justice, and prosperity. For modernists, education and professionalism are seen as keys to upward mobility and the attainment of the American Dream. But there is a darker side to modernism, which is the object of much of the criticism aimed its way by the postmodernists. Modernism has produced rampant materialism, a consumer society, a ravaged environment, and unrestrained technology. It can be associated with oppression, exploitation, repression, violence, and even terror.⁷

For many postmoderns, previous generations have not solved the world's problems. Science and technology have not provided the answers. They are right. But neither will secular postmodern philosophy give them the

answers they seek. What is true for moderns is also true for postmoderns, and all people who ever lived or will live—only Jesus can fill the need in their souls.

Nevertheless, postmodern thinking has turned our world upside down. Len Sweet writes, “A flood tide of a revolution is cutting its swath across our world and is gathering prodigious momentum.”⁸ We must view our world as a postmodern world.

So, ready or not . . . if we desire to have a successful ministry to today's woman, we must change our tactics to win her. We must approach her in a way she can understand. What characterizes the postmodern woman?

FOUR ATTRIBUTES OF THE POSTMODERN WOMAN

I observe postmodernism in the women I teach at the seminary and minister to in our church. I see these trends in the media and in my neighbors. I now consider these factors as I prepare to teach the Bible and design courses.

1. “Double Loop Thinking”

Many postmodern woman have learned to feel comfortable believing two contradictory ideas at the same time and not be bothered by the contradiction. They believe our ability to understand truth is limited, so when faced with different facets of opposing truth, they ignore the inconsistencies. Life is so fast and full of mystery that many postmoderns believe they cannot comprehend it. For example:

- They live in an “in your face” but “get out of my face” society.⁹
- The company that markets the sexiest lingerie also promotes “Victorian” ambiance.¹⁰
- Technology pulls us together while pulling us apart.
- They think community and global at the same time.
- They are connected through technology but fascinated with the past.
- They love extremes but find simplicity attractive.
- They are closed off from the world by the internet, yet time on-line only makes them want to go to Australia—and they go.

2. *Three Times HOT*

High-Online Technology

High-Online Technology (HOT) has three distinct meanings for the postmodern. More has changed in the past fifty years than in the past five hundred years. Remember that our changing times parallel the transition from the medieval era to the modern era.¹¹ It is estimated that more information has been generated in the past three decades than in the previous five thousand years. One weekday edition of *The New York Times* contains more information than the average person encountered in an entire lifetime in seventeenth-century England.¹² The internet has changed our world.

I (Sue) have a love-hate relationship with technology. I love the services it performs as I write to you, but I hate when my computer acts up. It took me years to love texting, and I'm still slow. But Kelley, for instance, is at home behind the screen. To connect with younger women I must be HOT(ter).

Regarding the rapid advancements in technology, consider the following, written in our 2002 edition:

Do you realize that if your car is less than ten years old, it has at least thirty computers in it? Already some textbooks are online and updated daily. If you have a digital watch, it contains more computing power than existed in the world before 1962. Speech recognition systems can identify 230,000 words with 95 percent accuracy. Think of the changes in technology when voice activation becomes standard. Before long your computer will speak, your TV will listen, and your telephone will show you pictures. There's a cartoon in which a man says to his wife, "Answer the TV, honey, I'm watching the phone."¹³

Every one of these predictions is reality today. The way technology is changing our world leaves us breathless. We need to stay connected, or we will be out of touch. Consider the explosion of online spiritual resources such as podcasts, Bible studies, social media, blogs, and videos that many people use to supplement their spiritual walk.

Hands-on Truth

Postmoderns grew up learning that there was no absolute truth. Secular education assumes this fact and most postmoderns don't question it. They will go to the wall for a few principles—animal rights, the environment, and freedom of speech—but generally the concept of truth is hard for them.¹⁴ As a result they aren't easily reached by intellectual, linear arguments. The evangelist will need more than principles and propositions to win the postmodern. This is bad news for those of us who love truth and were trained to communicate it through propositions, three points, and a poem. Those skills will help us, but we need more.

Does this mean we no longer teach truth? Not at all. The postmodern needs truth desperately. We must continue teaching the Bible but not just sprinkling in topical tidbits of truth out of context. Trends in women's materials seem to take us in that direction. These approaches have quick appeal, but like junk food, they're not nourishing if we want to see real spiritual growth in women. We will address the necessity to teach the Bible book by book and in context later.

We must adapt our teaching methods to reach the postmodern mind, remembering that moderns also sit listening. We will dig into these methods in part 2.

"Hands-on Truth" requires that we live out the principles we teach *before* we expect our listeners to believe us. Above all other criteria, a postmodern ministry must be relational. First and foremost, Christians must show themselves to be fully integrated personally. Mayers asserts that John 17 is the most distinctive of many texts that call for Christians to be authentic in word and deed, i.e., lifestyle. Jesus is praying that the oneness he shares with the Father might be the same kind of oneness that we share within our own persons. There is to be no artificialness or hypocrisy! Christians must be truly caring, genuine, transparent. It is for such irrefutable authentic lives, not cold rationalistic assertions, that Jesus prays. Jesus wants us set apart in truth. That is our outward claim is identical with our inward reality.¹⁵

When the postmodern observes consistency in our lives, then we begin to earn the opportunity to engage in dialogue with her about the hope that we have.

Sweet writes that postmoderns are “dealers in love more than dealers in dogma. But in classic double-ring fashion, postmodern culture needs more truth, not less. The difference is that Truth is not a principle or a proposition but a Person. Truth is not rules and regulations but a relationship. God did not send a statement but a Savior.”¹⁶ Although biblical truths are stated and learned as propositions and principles, at the heart of Christianity stands a relationship with Jesus.

High on Touch

Postmoderns want experience, relationships, community, and interaction. Not content to sit and listen to someone speak to them, they want to participate. Many postmoderns are desperate for relationships.

During the panel discussion at the Oregon conference, the young women continually used the word *home*. Those who grew up without faith kept reiterating, “We never really had a home.” “We want to know what a home feels like.” “Could you make us part of your home?” Not only do they enjoy being invited into someone’s home, but they also seek healthy, intimate relationships. They want to be touched—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They want to belong.

Postmoderns think that hunger will be satisfied by belonging to a community of people. They don’t understand that only a relationship with Christ quenches our spiritual thirst. While they are learning, we envelop them in our authentic community to show them the difference Christ makes in our relationships. And there we teach them the truth—not only about Jesus, but also all the other truths from God’s Word. To embrace them we need an army of arms that are HOT—High on Touch. We need women from multiple generations to surround the mass of postmodern women seeking Christ, to reach out and embrace them where they live.

To reach the postmodern woman, we need to be HOT—High-Online Technology, Hands-on Truth, and High on Touch.

3. *Chaord*

Author Len Sweet coined this unusual term, meaning a mixture of chaos and order. As a modern woman I learned that chaos was bad, and order was next to godliness. I love structure. When my daughter Rachel studied on her

bed with the radio playing in the background, I would insist she turn off the music and sit at her desk. The next day I would find her on her bed again, background music playing away. The battle raged until I heard an expert teach on different learning styles. I recognized that my daughter's learning style differed from mine. I learned to let her study in ways that worked for her.

I have also observed that her generation is more comfortable in chaos. The world is so complex that they are used to several things going on at once. They seem to like it. They exist within the tension of order and chaos with far greater ease than my generation. Flexibility comes more naturally to the postmodern woman.

I have learned to look at ministry not as a rigid organization but rather as an organism that moves and bends in response to its environment. We are no longer wedded to methods out of habit or tradition. Now we try to adapt when appropriate. Of course, we never change the foundations of our ministry—our commitment to teach God's Word and to live out Titus 2—but now we value creative ways to better serve all the generations.

We call it *chaord*—a willingness to function without such rigid walls of structure. We will address the practical details of this concept in part 2.

4. *Spiritual Hunger*

“For the first time in US history, we are in the midst of a massive spiritual awakening that the Christian church is not leading. Americans are exhibiting the highest interest in spiritual matters in fifty years and Christianity is registering the least amount of interest and energy in fifty years.”¹⁷ For believers that is frightening. I grew up learning that science would solve all our problems and give us all the answers. People who believed in a real God or a real devil were considered ignorant in my childhood home. Over sixty years later, we now enjoy the comforts science and medicine bring, but we know the limits of science. Where do Americans go for answers?

Postmoderns look to engage with the spiritual. Many embrace various forms of spirituality without identifying with a faith in God. In a recent Barna Research study, 93 percent of those who defined themselves as “spiritual” hadn't attended a religious service in the past six months. Postmoderns want to know God, but they look suspiciously at organized “religion.” They don't trust bureaucracy, government, organizations, and institutions—or

anything remotely traditional. Barna Research believes “this group of *the spiritual but not religious* display an uncommon inclination to think beyond the material and to experience the transcendent.”¹⁸

While most integrate some form of spirituality in their lifestyle, not all are experiencing the benefits. In a recent study, Pew Research found only “sixty-four percent of religiously affiliated adults say they feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least weekly, compared with only forty percent of those who are unaffiliated.”¹⁹ Not all who identify themselves as spiritual experience internal peace. This reveals the gap in longing for the spiritual and lacking relationship with Jesus Christ. Our goal is to hone in on their longing for the spiritual while enlightening them to the truth of the Scriptures. This compels our ministry to think about the ways we can draw in postmoderns.

Some fear that catering to a postmodern crowd will compromise the integrity of our ministry, making it unrecognizable. Not so! It’s possible to adjust our methods to further our reach. In the first century, the early church sought to win souls and grow converts. The church met in homes, loosely connected (see Acts). Likewise, in a postmodern world, what outdated programs might we alter to woo young people? How can we adapt our ministry to appeal to their longing for God in the spiritual? We have spiritual food. Let’s present this food in a way that is palatable, because we know it will nourish them now and forever. If we don’t, they’ll go elsewhere for the spirituality they crave. To minister to postmoderns, we need a new model.

A Woman of Influence
ROXY HOCKENSMITH

by Amanda Sherzer

Roxy Hockensmith works as the Director of Women’s Ministry at McLean Bible Church (MBC) located right outside Washington, D.C. She understands the importance of her job because she understands the importance of women. “Women wear so many hats. They’re great connectors. If you reach women and help them to know Christ, you’ll reach so many people. You’ll impact friends, husbands, and children.”

That truth hits close to home for Roxy. When she was a girl, her mother converted from Islam to Christianity and started attending MBC. Even though Roxy had no interest in church, her mom signed her up for MBC’s junior high camp. Roxy asked her camp counselor questions about Jesus for hours and decided to give her life to him that weekend. She went on to “practically live at McLean” during her teens. She recalled, “The women of the church helped raise me.”

Roxy now devotes her life to pouring into other women. She shepherds them and equips them with the tools to know and obey God’s Word. From organizing various mother’s groups, mission trips, and events, to supervising Bible studies, Roxy is “one person overseeing a lot” as the only MBC women’s ministry staffer. She explained, “Recruiting, training, and empowering volunteers is a huge part of my job. I look and pray for people who are as excited about women’s ministry as I am.”

In a church that draws 8,000–10,000 attendees each week, Roxy longs for every woman to feel known. She shared, “We want to make a large church feel small.” She encourages women to find community by serving or joining a Bible study. Many of MBC’s members travel frequently and work long days—or they have spouses who do. Providing childcare at gatherings and ways for people to connect online (such as by watching MBC’s large group Bible study livestreamed on Facebook) helps keep women involved.

With around seventy-three countries represented at MBC, Roxy aims to invite diverse Christian speakers to events and offer special Bible studies. For example, Roxy—who is Iranian and speaks Farsi—recently began a study for Persian women.

She also regularly meets women for coffee and spends time in her office counseling. “Many woman don’t feel comfortable confiding in a man. I’m grateful our pastors value women and my role in ministering to them.”

After serving in her job for over two and a half years, Roxy offers a few pieces of advice for others who lead church women’s ministries:

- Don’t be afraid to advocate for your church’s women in an assertive and grace-filled way to ensure they are included, represented, and served.
- Keep a running list of the women with whom you meet and counsel. This list shows proof of the important work you do.
- Set boundaries. “You don’t have to go to everything! My relationship with God and my husband are most important, and I can’t do it all.”
- Find a group of four or five mature women at your church who can provide you with Godly counsel and support.
- Stay humble. “When I try to work in my own strength, I mess things up and burn out. If I work through God’s strength, the ministry flourishes.”

She declared, “I’m quirky. I don’t have it all together. I don’t take myself too seriously—but I take this calling and my job very seriously.”