

Called to Minister Empowered to Serve

God anoints Women and Men for Ministry

A Six-Session Curriculum for use in Congregational Ministry
with the 2013 text of the same title.

ANDERSON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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Session 1: Introduction to the Study

A Story: They were sisters: the youngest one's name was Mildred, the other, Isabelle. Isabelle was one of the oldest children of the Beezley household of Merrimac Springs, MO. As Isabelle finished the education available to her in the young state of Missouri, she headed to Anderson, Indiana to join the Gospel Trumpet Family, the seedling of the Church of God Reformation Movement. Mildred and Isabelle were cousins to John A. Morrison who would become the first President of what is now Anderson University. It was in Anderson that Isabelle met Ed Holcomb, a young man who felt the call of God on his life, to be a minister of the Word of God. Ed and Isabelle married and moved to Northern California to plant a church. They both were ordained in the Church of God. Isabelle's ordination was counter to the culture of the USA. Only the Salvation Army and the Church of God (Anderson) ordained women at the time.

Mildred was only thirteen (1919) when she took the train from Missouri to join her sister and brother-in-law on the west coast. A few short years later, Mildred was playing the piano for a traveling Church of God evangelist in tent meetings throughout central and north California. It was during one of those tent meetings that Mildred met Richard Kyker. They were married a few years later, and helped Frank and Margaret LaFont and Ernie and Grace LaFont plant the Church of God in Bakersfield, California.

Isabelle and Mildred were women who played significant roles in the ministry of the Church of God on the west coast of the United States in the early years of the Reformation Movement. What they did, and how they did it was contrary to “mores” of the larger society. Some eighty years later, four of the eight grandchildren of Mildred and Richard serve full-time in ministry. I am an ordained woman in ministry in the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). I am one of the granddaughters of this heritage of women in ministry, and I am the editor of the 2nd edition of *Called to Minister, Empowered to Serve* – the book that is the foundation of this curriculum addressing the subject of “Women and Men in Ministry Partnership.”

For Consideration: Adrienne Holmes experienced a call to ministry in a congregational context that did not believe women could or should be in ministry leadership. She experienced confusion, rejection, frustration, and finally acceptance. You can read her story on pages 145-146. Adrienne's experience begs some responses from us as we begin this series.

Question for Discussion: How did we move from women being affirmed in Scripture (both Old and New Testaments and the documents from the first few centuries) to women NOT being allowed and/or chosen for pastor or preaching responsibilities?*

Question for Discussion: Have you (individually or as a congregation) considered a woman as your pastor? Why or Why not?*

If your answer is:

1. *“It’s just not done.”*

(Then, please pay special attention to chapters 4-8 where you can read stories of women of today and long ago who *did*.)

If your answer is:

2. *Scriptures like the following which are used to forbid it:*

I Timothy 2:8-15: “...I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man...”

I Timothy 3:1-13: “...bishops (and elders) should be a man of one wife...”

1 Corinthians 11:1-16: “...Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, ... any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head...”

1 Corinthians 14:26-40: “As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law

also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home.

For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

(Adrienne Holms' call story (pgs 145-146) addresses I Timothy 3:1-13, and chapter three: *Biblical Precedence of Women in Ministry* looks at all these important New Testament passages.)

If your answer is:

3. "God just doesn't call women into ministry."

(Then, you'll want to closely read chapter 8: *Contemporary Women and their "Call" to Ministry*.)

Closing Thought: Is there an ethic of inclusion or exclusion that comes into play as we consider Women in Ministry?

*These two questions will be asked again in Session 6: *Women, Change, and the Church*, they are key to our practice of accepting or rejecting women in ministry leadership.

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Session 2: Ethics of Unity and Holiness

(You'll want to read the first chapter of the text *Called to Minister Empowered to Serve* before this class session.)

A Story: On my (Megan Biddle) journey to the Holy Land I encountered encouragement where I least expected it; at the breakfast table. I grew up in the American Baptist Church which is supportive of women in ministry, but has not always vocalized it. I knew I had been called into ministry, but after receiving my call at age seventeen, I was told women couldn't be in ministry. I had no idea how much of a healing and journey of confirmation that my trip to Israel would be.

One morning, I was running late for the bus, so I quickly tried to scarf down my breakfast of eggs and toast. As I grabbed my day pack to leave, the man at the table next to me said, "Good Morning. Where are you from?" "Hello. I am from Indiana." "Well, We are from Tennessee, Baptists. Have you been to Jerusalem yet?" "No, that comes later in the week, today I am headed to Galilee." "Are you with the seminary group?" "Yes, I am." Well, what denomination do you belong to?" "I am American Baptist." "Oh, I see." "I guess since we are friends now, I should tell you that I have been called to preach and I have every intention of doing so." My new friend slapped the table, "Women preachers," he said. "I love women preachers. We may be Southern Baptists, but that doesn't mean we aren't reasonable people." His wife leaned over and said, "You know, four of Phillip's daughters were preachers. If God called you to preach, then preach you shall: don't let anyone stand in your way."

For Consideration: Cheryl Sanders looks at seven attributes of God to help us think about our Theological Assumptions about God. These seven attributes can be defined as:

1. Creativity: *"...the world and those who inhabit it have one common origin as the handiwork of one Creator..."*
2. Love: *"God's expression of active concern for the well-being of the human family God created ... manifested in the many roles that God assumes in relation to persons: as Father, as Savior and Deliverer, and as comforting Spirit."*
3. Truth: *"God is the source of all truth...God's word is true...[t]he truth of God is fully demonstrated in God's trustworthiness; God can be trusted to perform everything that God has promised."*

4. Righteousness: *“the predisposition toward making things right ... justice ... fairness ... equity...”*
5. Mercy: *“...gratuitous compassion...care expressed without regard to claims or rights.*
6. Grace: *“...the willingness of God to bestow divine favor ... redemption... The signs of grace in humankind have little to do with sex race, or economic status; instead they indicate success in pleasing God.”*
7. Holiness: *“...to be separate or set apart...holiness must include the perception that there exists a divine reality that is “other” than everyone/everything that is.”*

Question for Discussion: Which of these seven is the most important to you today?

Question for Discussion: If our understanding of God is creativity, love, truth, righteousness, mercy, grace and holiness, can we designate a corresponding ethic for the people of God to imitate God (to walk in the WAY of the Christ)?

Closing Thought: There is a line from a hymn written in the late 1880s that says: “We reach our hands in fellowship to every blood washed one.” It has been foundation for unity as an expression of holiness (Warner). In consideration of this Sanders comments, “If holiness is our method and unity is our goal, then our ethical practices ought to be governed by the fruitfulness, love, truthfulness, righteousness, compassion, and forgiveness that set us apart as the holy people of a holy God. A system that reserves the vast majority of pastoral and administrative leadership positions in the church for white men not only deviates from the principles of racism. Such a system also perpetuates itself by providing role models and support networks for white men who desire to serve, in effect excluding and discouraging those who are not white or male from aspiring to be trained and employed as leaders” (pg 11-12). How do you respond to this? What might you (I) or your (my) congregation do to live out this ethical call for inclusion?

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Session 3: Culture or Counter-Cultural

(You'll want to read the second chapter of the text *Called to Minister Empowered to Serve* before this class session.)

A Story: After Joshua had brought God's people into the Promised Land they rebelled and continually turned to other gods. As a result, God let their enemies gain the upper hand and enslave them. However, God did not abandon God's people. When they cried out to God for help, God raised up judges (Judg. 2:16). These judges were special individuals appointed by God to bring the people back to God's self, defeat their enemies and lead. One of these was Deborah—a woman.

As a judge, Deborah functioned as the people's spiritual and civil leader, their highest authority. Her leadership is evident from the text when it says that she "...was judging Israel at the time" and "the people came up to her for judgment" (Judg. 4:4, 5). In addition, as commander-in-chief, Deborah summoned Barak, the general. Barak insisted that Deborah go into battle with him, and Deborah responded "I will surely go with you," but warned him that God was going to give the glory to a woman.

Deborah serves as a clear example of a woman appointed by God to the highest levels of leadership over God's people, politically and spiritually. So, what do people do with Deborah when she does not fit **their cultural, interpretive mold**? In various ways they make her out to be less of a leader than she was.

1. Some decide that she was not really a judge, that her service as prophet made her leadership a passive one.
2. Some minimize Deborah's leadership by suggesting she was a last resort judge because God couldn't find any good men around.
3. Many take Barak's request for Deborah's presence in battle to be a sign of his weakness—hiding behind a woman instead of trusting in God.

Not only did God choose Deborah to judge, but the text indicates that God was pleased with her leadership. The place of her ruling is named after her: at the "palm of Deborah" it is said that the people "came up to her" indicating her status as a leader. Even Judges chapter five celebrates Deborah's leadership as "Israel's mother." (adapted from: Allison Quient. CBE weekly eNewsletter *Arise*. March 7, 2013)

For Consideration: Culture has been defined as:

1. “The set of learned behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals that are characteristic of a particular society or population” (Kraft)
2. “A system comprising all the patterns of behavior, ideas, ways of understanding reality and products in any given society” (Clinton).
3. “The integrated system of products, ideas, patterns of thought, and patterns of behavior, which characterize a particular society; these are learned by the members of the society and are not the result of biological inheritance” (Clinton).

Cultural systems include attitudes, values, habits, customs and rituals some of which can be easily explained and those that are not so easily explained. Sometimes we just do things because that is “what is done” in the culture where we were born.

Question for Discussion: Name some women of the Old Testament who did things in obedience to God, but contrary to their culture. Read Chapter 2 for some ideas.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

8. Huldah (in case you didn't find her). 2 Kings 22:14-15a *So the priests Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the **prophetess Huldah** the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her. She declared to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ...”*

Question for Discussion: Understanding the “helper” in Genesis: Gen. 2:20-25 *The man (‘adam) gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as partner (‘Ezer Cenegdo). So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man (‘adam), and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man (‘adam) he made into a woman (also still ‘adam) and brought her to the man. The man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman for out of Man this one was taken.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.*¹

It is important, as a foundation, that we understand that the female was NOT created beneath or under the male. Joseph Coleson writes:

The author (of Genesis) respects the reader’s intelligence, and does not tell us, “This is the power corresponding to the ‘adam.” But we know. And we know that God is pleased with this one, the final creation. Further, we know that God expects the man to be pleased with this one and to recognize her. With the ‘adam now differentiated into male and female, human companionship is possible. Each will find in the other a power corresponding to him/her. Human solitude and isolation need be no longer. What was “not good,” God now can pronounce, “very good.”(p. 17)

Do you see men as authoritative leaders? Do you see men and women as equals? Do you see the possibility of women being leaders over men?

¹ If you would like a further study on this important passage please go to www.wesleyanholinesswomensclergy.org and from the “Resources” request ‘Ezer Cenegdo: A Power Like Him, Facing Him as Equal by Joseph E. Coleson.

Closing Thought: Joel 2:28-29 says,

Then afterward

*I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions,
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.*

Note the words used: “all flesh,” “daughters,” and “female slaves.” Not only has gender/sex been addressed for inclusion, but race and social economics as well. Ask yourself: Am I willing to be counter-cultural (go against culture) if that is what God is calling me to?

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Session 4: New Testament Precedents for Women in Ministry

(You'll want to read the third chapter of the text *Called to Minister Empowered to Serve* before this class session.)

A Story: I (Jenny Marble) was born into a family legacy of male and female Church of God ministers, going back to the days of the beginning of our Reformation Movement. Having parents who were raised in ministry households, and being pastors themselves, ministry as a vocation was my “normal”.

After years of dreaming of becoming a preacher (yet believing this was not a possibility), I finally heard a woman preach and my life was changed. I remember thinking that if God could speak through this woman like God speaks through many male preachers I have heard, God can speak through me.

During my junior high and high school years, I had a phenomenal youth pastor who helped me to see the areas of giftedness I did not see in myself. He gave me opportunities to lead small groups, organize activities, never telling me what I could not do: instead, he always told me that he believed in me and supported me in my call to vocational ministry. When others asked me what I wanted to study in college, I informed them I felt led to be a youth pastor and serve in the church in some capacity, but not as a senior pastor.

I remember sitting in one of my undergraduate ministry classes where we discussed our views on women in vocational ministry. My professor asked me to share my thoughts. Sitting in that chair I realized that I face a major barrier in ministry daily simply because I am a woman. I had spent my entire life observing preachers, being appointed to leadership positions without asking for them, qualifying for scholarships to pay for school. Saying that a woman cannot be who God has created her to be is like saying that God did not create her, or that she should not have been born.

My own words spoken in class that day convicted me. I realized that if that is how I feel, my actions should show likewise. If God has called me to faithfully serve the community of God, how can I better prepare myself, and what am I holding back? What am I going to do next? I completed my application for Anderson University School of Theology not longer after this.

In fall of 2009, I was accepted into the SOT. My first opportunity to preach came through required Homiletics course my senior year at Warner Pacific. The reality is I knew I could preach all along. I simply was never given the opportunity. I felt freedom the moment I preached

my first sermon, and joy in ways I had never experienced; the Spirit's overwhelming presence, and confidence in my call.

I declared my area of focus as Master of Divinity at the School of Theology. I was determined to lean into the discomfort of my call. Colleagues in ministry helped me to see that if God is calling me to be a senior pastor, God will provide me with the mentors, resources, and strength I need. Since preaching my first sermon three years ago, I have had numerous opportunities to preach, and teach. My dream now is to do doctoral work in preaching so that I may encourage future ministers in their call as my mentors did with me. I know God can open the doors for me in ministry. I am looking forward to the future with anticipation, knowing that God's call for me is limitless, and only God can define it.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Does the Bible provide an answer for every question or issue of life? If so, how? If not, do you use the Bible for guidance?

2. How do you decide which scriptures should be taken literally (should be done exactly as stated in every culture for all time), and which passages are contextually, culturally driven (lessons should be derived and applied when applicable)?

3. Many people say that women should not be ministers because there were no women in the twelve Jesus called disciples. Do you agree or disagree? (See pgs. 35-37)

4. How do you reconcile I Corinthians 11:5 where Paul assumes women are praying and prophesying in church and I Corinthians 14:34 where Paul says “women be silent”? (See pgs 40-44)

Closing Thought: If Paul affirms and utilizes women for ministry leadership, why would he write the comments about authority and childbirth in I Timothy 2:8-15? (See pgs. 45-55)

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Session 5: Church of God Women who *did* and *do* Ministry.

(You'll want to read chapters 4-8 of the text *Called to Minister Empowered to Serve* before this class session.)

A Story: Even though Mary Cole was plagued with illness and bedridden by the age of fifteen, she did not allow her health conditions to get in the way of her call to preach. She left her Decatur, Iowa home where she was born in 1853, and eventually the Methodist Episcopal Church when they continued to refuse to license women. Mary was encouraged by and often traveled with her brothers, Jeremiah and George, and although she faced dangers such as having shots fired at her during a camp meeting in Mole Hill, West Virginia and facing arrest, she continued to pursue her call.

Mary was healed of her physical infirmity in 1880, and was able to travel the country as an evangelist, despite the considerable opposition she faced. Eventually she and her brother George settled in Chicago for ten years working in the slum neighborhoods with the homeless men and missionaries in the area. She moved to Anderson, Indiana to care for her mother and remained there until her death in 1940. (See Chapter 4 for the rest of the story.)

Another Story: Shannon New-Spangler grew up in a pastor's home and never had *any* intention of being in ministry. At eighteen, she went to Anderson University as a mathematics major with the purpose of being a teacher. After taking an "Intro to the Bible" class she changed her major to Bible and Religion. Throughout her last two years at college she wrestled with where God was calling her. Upon graduating from college she took a youth pastorate, serving for a year and a half before enrolling in Anderson University School of Theology for her Master of Divinity degree. While in seminary she received assurance of her call to ministry. Assurance of a call to ministry however, is not a guarantee of a place of ministry. Even with beginning the search in her final year of seminary it was almost two years of frustration, doubt, and rejection before being called to Harvest Point Church in Lordstown, OH. Shannon has been serving at Harvest Point for over three years at the time of this publication. (See Chapter 8 for the rest of Shannon's story.)

For Your Consideration: Women have always had a role in ministry. Miriam is listed in the Old Testament along with Aaron and Moses as one of the three prophets that brought the Israelites out of Egypt (Ex. 15:20; Micah 6:4). When the Israelites cried out to God for help

during the period of Judges, there were men, such as Barak available, but God called Deborah. Anna was the first person to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 2:25-38). Phoebe is known as a deacon of the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). Scriptures that call people to question the role of women in ministry, such as 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 must be understood within their historical context, as all scripture should. This passage is not calling women to be silent, it is a passage against gnostic teaching. "...There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27-28).

Question for Discussion: Have you ever known a woman in ministry? What barriers do you think she faced (including race)?

Question for Discussion: What woman in ministry (biblical or in more recent history) has inspired you in your walk with Christ? In what way?

Closing Thought: Allowing Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 4:4-6 to speak to one another, a contemporary reading might be: "Ethnicity and/or race have no bearing on a person's worth for ministry; Socio-economics, wealth or poverty cannot determine God's call to ministry; Gender is irrelevant because there is ONE body and ONE Spirit, ONE hope of our calling, ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God who is above all, through all, and in all." What image or emotion does this raise in you?

Session 6: Women, Change and the Church

(You'll want to read the last chapter and the appendix of the text *Called to Minister Empowered to Serve* before this class session.)

A Story: It was the middle of the 1980s and I was a pastor's wife. I had experienced a call to ministry that was apart from (but would "walk with") my husband's ministry. God had also confirmed my call with my husband so he was (and is) fully supportive. We made the decision to wait and see how God would open doors. As God opened the doors I entered the credentialing process. My first interview with the committee was difficult. Though I had been doing ministry alongside my husband for more than ten years, they felt I had "little to no" ministry experience and therefore did not meet the requirements for a ministry license. I asked for a copy of the requirements and was told that they were not "written, but understood" by the committee.

I later met personally with a member of the committee I knew well and asked again about written requirements and/or process. He invited me to write a process which over the next six months I completed. He also suggested that he present what I write as it would be more likely accepted. Yes, he was a white male. During all of this time I was serving as secretary to the state General Assembly and therefore a member of the Executive Committee. At the mid-year meeting the pastor/member of the Credentials Committee I had worked with, presented what I had written as a Credentials Process proposal: claiming authorship. Motion passed. It was later presented to the General Assembly where it passed as well.

I met again with the Credentials Committee the following month and was given a ministry license and admonished to follow the new credentials process.

Two years later, I had met all of the requirements and I scheduled my final interview: my husband joined me. After some discussion with the committee we were asked to step out for a few minutes: I was incredibly nervous. Re-entering the room the chairman of the committee said, "Well I personally believe that women should be kept barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen ... (snicker) ... but since you meet all of the requirements, I guess we have to ordain you." I didn't find it funny. I still don't find it funny. What I do find strange is that in conversations with young women situations like this still happen. The particulars may be different, but women being demeaned in the credentialing process continue still. Is this not the Church of God? (From an anonymous source.)

For Consideration: The Church of God has affirmed women in ministry since the very beginning of the Movement. Statistically speaking, there are more women in pulpits and other ministry positions than there has been since about 1940. But statistics don't tell the stories of the women who cannot secure a place for ministry, even when there are open pulpits in the area. Clergywomen are heading into chaplaincy, teaching positions, para-church ministries, or becoming bi-vocational, pastoring churches that cannot afford to pay a pastor, so that they may have a place to live out their call to ministry.

Question for Discussion: How can we support women called to ministry as they face challenges and/or barriers in living their call?

Question for Discussion: How can we reconcile congregations that refuse to consider, to support, or to call into pastoral responsibility, women clergy with the historical and theological stand of the Church of God Reformation Movement (or other Holiness Denomination)?

Closing Thought: Over the last several weeks there have been a number of questions that have been thought about, discussed, and researched. This study closes with the questions asked in Session One: How did we move from women being affirmed in Scripture (Old and New Testaments, and the first few centuries) to women NOT being allowed and/or chosen for pastor or preaching responsibilities? Have you (individually or as a congregation) considered a woman as your pastor? Why or Why not? Take time to evaluate these for changes in thought and proposed changes of behavior.