

SisterLink

A Women's Ministry
Newsletter of the Regional
Synod of Canada

Fall 2011



Canadian Leadership Conference

On **April 27-30, 2012**, the Regional Synod of Canada is hosting a Canada-wide leadership conference. The theme of this conference is "Freed to Lead". This conference is for Pastors, Consistory members, and church leaders ie. worship leaders, bible study leaders, youth leaders, and **women's ministry leaders**.

I'll be leading a workshop at this conference on "Gospel-Centred Women's Ministry" and it will be an opportunity for leaders to reflect and refocus on ministry.

Find more details on this conference at www.reformed-church.com/2012Conference.html



Resource Issue for Leaders

This issue of SisterLink is for each of you women's ministry leaders across Canada, who works hard, often with few resources and over-filled schedules, but always embodying a deep love for the women you serve. I am continually inspired and filled with joy at how you work to draw women in your churches and communities together in the presence of our heavenly Father. Many of you have committed years to serving and ministering to and with women, some of you are new to the adventure that is women's ministry, and this edition of SisterLink is especially for both of you! In it, you will find tools, tips, and ideas that come with the sincere prayer that God would refresh you continually as you pour out your lives in gratitude for the grace that you've been given.

Please feel free to send your own tips, tricks, ideas and resource suggestions my way at clabbe@reformed-church.com in order that I might share them with your sisters across Canada.

Tired and Weary?

Ministry can sometimes be a lonely, difficult, and time-consuming task. It's easy to be overwhelmed in light of the job, but there is a solution. First, remind yourself whose ministry this is... all ministry belongs to God! Secondly, refuel at the Source of Life. The text tells us that "out of the overflow the mouth speaks", and similarly we need to minister out of the overflow. When next you find yourself overwhelmed, spend some extra time in prayer and reading scripture and you will find yourself refreshed in perspective and renewed in hope and purpose!



Bible Studies That Bear Fruit

Preparing and Leading Effectively

by Babette Moerman, from Home Church in Langley, BC

What a privilege and golden opportunity we have to gather together as women feeding on God's Word so we'll grow and mature spiritually. God's Word is rich in truth and can take root in our hearts with promises He is eager to fulfill in our lives. "The word of God is living and active!" (Hebrews 4:12). We have the potential to engage in living and powerful studies of God's Word – the Living Word! We want to make the most of our time together.

Getting Started

To approach God's Word is to be under the authority of God's Word. So beginning with prayer, I ask God for His wisdom and for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide me as I prepare the study. As Samuel said, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."

Next, it's important to read the Scripture verses over as many times as possible in the week before our study, even memorizing a portion of the passage is very helpful to receive deep insights and good questions. Reading the passage(s)

in several translations is helpful as well. To that end, one of my resources is the Eight Translation New Testament and when we are studying the Old Testament I have other translations that I look at as well. For a good online tool, you can go to www.biblegateway.com and line-up five passages in columns side-by-side to gain a fuller understanding.

There are many excellent study Bibles in circulation, too. I use the New Geneva Study Bible which has a great many study aids as does the Life Application Bible. Another favorite of mine is the NIV Serendipity Bible and the New Testament Lessonmaker. And one more worth mentioning – The Message by Eugene Peterson which is a thoroughly contemporary paraphrase of the Bible. Using the internet, I recommend my favorite site for in-depth commentary – verse by verse. Go to

www.ewordtoday.com/comments and you'll find every book, every chapter, every verse of the Bible explained by seven classic Bible scholars who are sure to bring you things you wouldn't know otherwise. Choose your favorite commentary and go back to it, time after time.

I try to do as much research and background reading as possible because when the study begins, women are sure to ask questions and I want to be ready.

Choosing a Study Guide

Sometimes I start with a ready-made Bible Study guide where someone else has already done the research and prepared the questions. There are so many excellent resources out there! But when I do, I still think it's important to work from those guides *only as a guide* and still do my homework by modifying, adding, deleting, and adjusting in order to make it my own. The alternative is to write your own Bible Studies. I usually alternate between the two approaches.

Writing the Bible Study

The Bible itself says, "All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). *Continued on page 3*

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“Bible Studies That Bear Fruit”

That’s important because a good Bible Study needs to focus on the Word of God and not opinions, current events, trends or feelings.

Having said that, you need a good opening question (or two) to build a strong connection between the women’s life situation and the Bible lesson you’re hoping to share.

These are not heavy questions, but introductory and ice-breaking. For example, “choose a fruit or vegetable that best describes you or an aspect of your character. Share at least one reason why.” Sounds like a weird question, but women will have a lot of fun with this one and offer many creative insights. These type of questions are also helpful in getting to know one another better.

You can tailor the opening questions to the current study. When we studied the book of Esther, I asked “What beauty treatment would you have enjoyed for one year?”

Or you can play the Word Association Game – mention the word (“servanthood” or “forgiveness” or “women”) and have the women say what immediately comes to their minds.

Then it’s time to read aloud and study the verses. God’s Word is for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so there needs to be questions that are practical and applicable to our lives. Questions like:

- How has God done this in your life?
- How are you strengthened or encouraged by that verse?
- Share one way that you can put this into practice in your life.



God’s Word is meant to interact with every part of our lives. His Word transforms, encourages, convicts, challenges and so much more. Asking the right questions is key. It’s how we can connect God’s Word to individual hearts. When I read God’s Word – and especially as I go verse by verse – I often ask myself how can I apply this and live it out. I also anticipate the questions that will be asked, often because I’m asking them myself as I prepare. When studying an Old Testament passage, it is very interesting to do the extra research to find out the significance and meaning of certain words, symbols and ceremonies, etc. Recently I led a Bible Study on the Book of Ruth and it was important to learn about the threshing floor, a key setting for situations in this beautiful book. This research helped us understand the great risk Ruth took in going there – it was a dangerous place. This naturally led then to a question about the threshing floors God was calling us to and our obedience.

Another time we studied the Old Testament book of Esther and after understanding the characters in the book, I asked the women if God was calling them to be “a Mordecai” to someone and challenge them with the truth.

Preparing Good Questions

Digging into God’s Word often happens through well-prepared questions. You don’t have to undermine people’s intelligence by asking grade 1 kind of questions (“Jack and Jill went up the hill”. So, ladies, who went up the hill? “Jack and Jill.”)

On the other hand, it’s important not to assume that everyone knows what all the words mean. For example, if you come across “the mercy seat”, you can’t assume people know what that means. Dig. Do your homework. Many times, you’ll need to go to other verses in the Bible to help explain or understand what you are studying. It enriches our understanding of the verses when we do this.

I also have a concluding part to each Bible Study that usually ends with a question that is just between each woman and God Himself. It is quite personal and reflective, calling for a specific action that can be taken in the days to come. Often it leads to a way we can pray for one another. To me the real Bible study takes place afterwards by putting what we’ve learned into practice. These are the Bible studies that bear fruit – to be hearers and doers of the Word.

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Leading Like a Lady

A Message from Claudette Reid,
Coordinator of Women's Ministry for the RCA

Dear Sister: "Grace be with you, mercy and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." (II John 1:3, KJV)

So, can we talk here for a few moments: Do you sometimes hear yourself say (or think): **"What's wrong with these guys?... They just don't get it!!!"** OR... Do you also believe that "men are from Mars, and women are from Venus"? **DO NOT DESPAIR--YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

From time to time we find it hard to imagine that although we are sisters and brothers, linked by the precious blood of our Savior and Brother Jesus, it seems so difficult to communicate our passions and values and ideas to the other sex. Aren't we all God's children? Aren't we all Christians? Aren't we all working towards the same goals? Yes, yes, and yes!!!

But the answer to our frustration may be hidden in the following scripture:

"So God created human beings to be like himself; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them men and women." [Genesis 1:27; *The Message & Contemporary English Version*]

The scripture does not only say that God created human beings- it specified that God created males and females! Both his creation, but each unique in sex and gender. As women leaders and servants in the kingdom, allow me to share a brief summary of our uniqueness in how we lead and manage our tasks. This is summarized from several studies conducted on leadership and gender. Here are the findings:

1. Women are more oriented toward focusing on completing their tasks in an organized and efficient manner. Achieving high standards and obtaining the best results is highly important. While this is somewhat true for men, they seemed to focus more on a strategic approach to leadership and management. *(By the way, in some studies, the opposite is true ☺)* Regardless, we fail to communicate sometimes, because while one group is centered on tasks--the other is obsessed with strategy.
2. Women are more expressive, as can be seen by their energy, intensity, and emotional expression. The advantage is that they also draw others into this level of enthusiasm and drive. Men, on the other hand are more constrained, preferring to seem unemotional and detached from the activity. Another term for this is being 'objective'. Oh well...
3. Women tend to concentrate on collaboration—seeking input from others more than men who find it more useful to hone in on the final outcome, the bottom line, with less regards for collaboration.

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4. Although both men and women believed equally that the most important characteristic of a leader is INTEGRITY (Amen to that!), **inspiration** and **flexibility** (gaining the same score) ---were chosen by the men as second most important characteristic required for leaders; while women believe that **having a vision** was next in importance. **Flexibility, people skills** and **adaptability to change** all tied for third place.

Do women work harder than men at any of the following?

| | Men Agree | Women agree |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Organizing and doing the work | 13.6% | 61.1% |
| Doing things right | 27.3% | 61.1% |
| Managing data or information | 9.1% | 33.3% |
| Managing the employees or team | 45.5% | 65.3% |
| Meeting deadlines or getting to the end game | 0% | 40.3% |
| Seeking input from all concerned sources | 68.2% | 70.8% |
| Managing expectations of people about the work | 40.9% | 61.1% |
| Keeping management informed | 22.7% | 52.8% |
| Promoting themselves and their abilities | 22.7% | 27.8% |
| Other | 13.6% | 11.1% |

We also turned the tables and posed the same question about men. Here are the results of those responses:

Do men work harder than women at any of the following?

| | Men Agree | Women Agree |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Organizing and doing the work | 0% | 7.4% |
| Doing things right | 8.7% | 11.8% |
| Managing data or information | 21.7% | 25% |
| Managing the employees or team | 4.4% | 8.8% |
| Meeting deadlines or getting to the end game | 34.8% | 33.8% |
| Seeking input from all concerned sources | 8.7% | 11.8% |
| Managing expectations of people about the Work | 4.4% | 8.8% |
| Keeping management informed | 26.1% | 17.6% |
| Promoting themselves and their abilities | 60.9% | 88.6% |
| Other | 17.4% | 11.8% |

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Resources for Growing Your Leadership

The RCA has developed several **free** resources that could be very useful in leadership development.

The first, "Purposeful Living" is a resource to help you, as a leader, discover increasingly who God designed you to be and express how you understand and live out your calling as a baptized disciple of Jesus. This resource can be used alone, or preferably, as part of a small group.

<http://images.rca.org/docs/consistency/PurposefulLiving.pdf>

Secondly, a "Discipleship Coaching Journal". An excellent discipleship resource. This tool could be incredibly helpful in a mentoring relationship or a discipleship setting.

<http://images.rca.org/docs/discipleship/DiscipleshipCoachingJournal.pdf>



2 Peter 3:18, is my prayer for each of you and your leadership, it says, But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

OPPORTUNITY



Does the idea of working with other women in the Word thrill your heart?

Do you enjoy writing?

Do you want to dig deep into the Word with your sisters across Canada?

Do you want to be on a team developing discipleship resources for other women?

The Regional Synod of Canada Women's Ministry is putting together a team of women who will work together to write a Bible study. This initial offering will be a basic study in Christian Discipleship, and will be offered free-of-charge to women's groups in the RCA in Canada.

No experience is required, however those involved must have a love for the word of God, access to the Internet, and a passion to see women engage with each other while they study.

To join this team, email me at clabbe@reformed-church.com

Christmas Magic

(an event idea)

- **Have Caroling Greeters at the door, welcoming all girlfriends with Christmas cheer.**
- **Decorations and food are simple... just think Christmas!**
- **Get girlfriends talking, at tables set out questions like:**
What is your favourite Christmas tradition? **and** What's your favourite Christmas carol and why? Have you ever regifted a Christmas gift? Have you ever sneaked a peek at a Christmas gift?
- **Have someone share a short talk called "My Re-gift to you" telling the Christmas story and share the gospel story... this is the best re-gifting!**

Joy to the World: This is the perfect season to show others our love. Have a station where girlfriends can sit and mingle, while making Christmas cards with stamps and scrapbook supplies. They can make a card for a special elderly person, someone who is sick, or a friend.

Gift of Giving Game: Buy several small gifts to give away as part of this game, such as a candle, some body lotion, or a small gift certificate. Wrap each gift item in several layers of wrapping paper. Gather your girlfriends in a circle, and hand one girlfriend a gift to pass around the group. Have a CD with holiday music ready to play. Tell them to start passing the gift when you turn the music on. When you turn the music off, whoever has the gift gets to unwrap one layer of paper. Keep going until the last layer of paper is unwrapped. The girlfriend that finally unwraps it gets the gift!

Stocking Guessing Game: Gather some fun Christmas socks or fluffy pink and green ones to use as stockings. (The thicker the better!) Fill the stockings with things you would use at Christmas, such as pinecones, ornaments, mistletoe, tape, and so on. Place the same items in each stocking. Tie a Christmas bow on top of each sock so there's no peeking! Circulate the socks throughout the evening, and let each girlfriend write down on a piece of paper every item they can feel. Whoever guesses the most objects is the winner! Have a small prize for the winner such as gift-wrapping supplies or a pair of Christmas socks.

Gifted Twin Relay: Divide girlfriends into teams of eight, and have each woman partner up with someone on her team. Have each girlfriend put one hand on her partner's waist. The "Siamese twins," will run to the wrapping station, wrap a gift (one using her left hand, the other using her right hand), and then run back to tag the next set of twins. The team to have all the twins wrap a gift first wins!

Hustle and Bustle: This game will prepare you for the Christmas sales! Have several teams of 10 gals line up next to one another, sitting or standing. At one end of the line, place six Christmas ornament. Each girlfriend will take her left hand and grab the right wrist of the person on her right. When the leader calls, "hustle," the teams pass all the ornaments down and back again while still holding wrists. If an ornament falls, players must retrieve it while still holding on. The girlfriend chain must not be broken in this hustle and bustle! We have each other's back! The team that finishes first wins.

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For more information about this study or ideas on how to implement solutions to career limiting leadership behaviors at your company, contact us at The Innis Company, 972.702.9484 or info@inniscompany.com.

So sisters, does this summary help you to understand our brothers (and ourselves) a little better? I hope so. Here's the good news: BOTH SEXES WANT TO SERVE THE LORD. WE JUST HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF GETTING THINGS DONE.

So the next time, we feel our blood pressure rising at the consistory meeting, or around the dining table or in the car on a road trip, or in the backyard as we complete those last fall projects before the winter months---just remember *'God created them men and women.'*

And if anyone asks you: *WHAT'S GENDER GOT TO DO WITH IT?*

The response is: EVERYTHING!!!

Blessings and Shalom!
Claudette

Bibliography

"Do Men and Women Lead Differently? Who's Better"---

By Ronald Riggio

(PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, March 23, 2010)

"The Way Women and Men Lead—Different, but Equally Effective"---By Robert Kabacoff & Helen Peters. (MRG Research Report, Management Research Group, 1998, 2010).



The Office of Women's Ministries seeks to celebrate the roles women have in the church and come along side women to encourage them and enable richer ministry.

Women's Ministries emphasizes personal discipleship, while we create and foster powerful Christian communities among women, and ultimately do our part in reaching the lost for Christ.

The Office of Women's Ministries is committed to:

- **connecting with the women** who have remained faithful in their respective ministries over the years;
- **forging new relationships** with younger women (using newer technology and social networking) across the denomination;
- and **facilitating convenings** and or providing divine spaces where women in our denomination can participate in opportunities to give of their time, talents and gifts, and grow in their relationship with Christ.

As we meet and speak with women across the denomination it has become clearer that ALL women--regardless of region, age, stage, race, ethnicity, class, position in the church--all desire to do at least three things: GATHER, GIVE, and GROW in their relationship with Christ.

(from the RCA website www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=1949)

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Babette's Bible Study Recommendations from Women Encouraging Women

- ☞ Daniel: Pursuing Integrity, by: J. Ortberg, K. and S. Harney
- ☞ Ruth: Relationships That Bring Life, by: Ruth Haley Barton
- ☞ Ruth: Loss, Love, and Legacy, by: Kelly Minter
- ☞ 1 and 2 Samuel: Growing a Heart for God, by: J. Ortberg, K. and S. Harney
- ☞ John: The Way to True Life, by D. Connelly
- ☞ Nehemiah: Overcoming Challenges, by: B. Hybels, K. and S. Harney
- ☞ 2 Corinthians: Serving from the Heart, by: J. Ortberg

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But don't go too far. I won't write or ask any questions that I am not prepared to answer myself. And if there is something I don't understand, I'll do my best to find out what it means or other verses that will help. Yet, there is still plenty that I am unable to comprehend. Be honest with your group – it's better to say "I don't know" or "I'll try to find that answer" than to make something up or confuse the matter.

Conclusion

I tend to over-prepare in terms of background information and questions. That way you can be sensitive to your group and choose the best questions and insights as the Holy Spirit leads you. Let's honor and glorify our God through our Bible Studies and may His name be lifted high! "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God!" (John 1:1)

-Babette Moerman

Why Does Everyone Keep Shooting at Me?

Leading Through Conflict

We've all had it; that moment where we realize that there's mutiny among us. The glare when we announced a new program, the angry phone call accusing us of misleading the group, the overheard gossip that reaches our ears about an unhappy follower. Conflict is inevitable, but it doesn't have to be destructive to us, or to those who follow our leadership. How can we deal well with conflict, as a leader? What follows are some of my reflections on conflict management. Feel free to email me at

clabbe@reformed-church.com with your own suggestions.

1. Know it is coming. As a leader, we must know that there will be those who disagree with us. We need to be prepared. Jesus experienced plenty of folks who disagreed with Him, and we will too. Check out Matthew 10:24, and 1 Corinthians 4:12-13

2. Choose now to be a God-pleaser. If you want to please people, you will not be able to honour God, (and you will

never please them all anyway). We must make hard decisions and lead down difficult roads, so be ready for the fall-out. It will come. Decide you will attempt to honor and please God in every action and attitude, regardless of what others say. Check out Galatians 1:10



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Resources for Conflict Management

Jesus said, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. As I reflect on that I notice one of the things he didn't say: those who sweep it under the rug, or pretend that nothing's wrong. He was speaking about those who actively seek to make peace. Repeatedly scripture talks about reconciliation and peace, from a position of having experienced the gospel. Below are resources, not just to help you manage conflict, but to help you be a peacemaker.



☞ [The Peacemaker](#), by Ken Sande - a Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict

☞ a free, printable pamphlet detailing peacemaking principles

www.peacemaker.net/site/apps/ka/ec/product.asp?c=aqKFLTObiPH&b=6598003&en=kvLPK4MSiIKTL6NTLcKOIeP2JsJ3KfPTLfK2KdOWIsK1J9NMKdITJ8PRInK8LsL&ProductID=923407

☞ Free resources and videos found on www.peacemaker.net like [Resolving Everyday Conflict](#) and [The Leadership Opportunity](#)

☞ [Peacemaking Church Women's Study: Living the Gospel in Relationships](#) - An 8 week-long video study for women, with Tara Barthel. This resource comes to us highly recommended by Joy Keefer from Wainfleet! Preview at:

www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTObiPH/b.4439585/k.A957/Peacemaking Church Womens Study Living the Gospel in Relationships.htm

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3. Be gracious with people when they disagree. People will criticize and reject you, but it does not need to result in your own bad attitude. It's easy to let someone else's attitude disturb your own. Start with a deep breath and a smile, this person is your sister, or brother in Christ. Do not gossip or speak about the situation with anyone except those involved, and perhaps, at times, a trusted advisor. We must love people regardless of how they deal with us. Check out Ephesians 4.

4. Listen with openness.

Change brings turmoil, and often we are prepared for attacks from the devil, not the disciples. On a practical level, one of the most important tools you have as a leader is listening. Seek to hear the heart behind the words. Listening does not necessarily mean changing the course that you have set out on, but it

conveys to all those you lead that you care about them. Try not to listen defensively, or attempt to change their mind, simply allow the dissenters to express themselves. Check out Proverbs 18:15.

5. Pray. It should be our first response, to often though, it falls to a last resort. C.S. Lewis said, “I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time- waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God- it changes me.” Pray for the situation, for the individual(s) involved, for yourself, and ultimately for God to be glorified in even this situation.

May all of the conflict you encounter be an opportunity for God to bring about good fruit in your life and in the lives of others, dear sisters.

– Christina Labbe





Blessing Boxes

A hearty “thank you” to all of you who have contributed to the Blessing Box fund. Churches, women’s groups, and individuals alike have shared from their blessings. The RSC Women’s Ministry Coordinator position is funded through your generosity. (The yearly requirement for this position is \$5000). **Your generous support continues to be necessary to maintain this position.** May you be richly blessed as you bless others!

Donations can be made to the blessing box fund by sending a cheque to the Regional Synod of Canada with “blessing box” marked in the memo line.

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Sister Link is an e-newsletter from the Coordinator of Women’s Ministry for the Regional Synod of Canada.

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If you received this newsletter from a friend and would like to receive new editions as available, contact me at the above email address.

ALSO, don’t forget to share this with your sisters in your church... they may not yet receive this newsletter and some of them do not have email. Consider printing a copy and posting it on a bulletin board. Please help to link all the sisters in our Regional Synod of Canada.

A special “thank you” to all the contributors to this edition of SisterLink. If you have a women’s ministry story or resources to share with your Canadian sisters, please email me at clabbe@reformed-church.com