

SHELeads.

SHELeads Questionnaire: My findings and some thoughts from this.

A note to anyone reading this....

If you have taken the time to read this, THANK YOU. And thank you especially if you are a man! It's easy to skip over things that don't apply to you without taking the time to stop and listen so I really appreciate you taking the time to read through this!

Before we get started there are a few key things I think you should bare in mind:

1. This questionnaire was filled out by a total of 70 women from a variety of denominations, backgrounds, age ranges and ethnicities. Although 70 people is quite a lot it will only give you a snapshot of the findings.
2. I sent this questionnaire to women who I know are actively leading in some form in their local churches. That means it was sent to women who have been given the opportunity to lead. There will be a whole group of women who did not receive this because they have not had the opportunity or been allowed to lead.
3. My purpose in doing this questionnaire was not to 'rant' about the problems we women leaders face but to use it as an access point for solutions asking 'how can we ensure the challenges faced now are NOT the challenges of future generations?'

As you read through these findings I want to encourage you to think about your own life and leadership and to be challenged to be intentional about raising female leaders, whether you are a man or a woman. So grab a cup of tea and let's get started....

The General Details

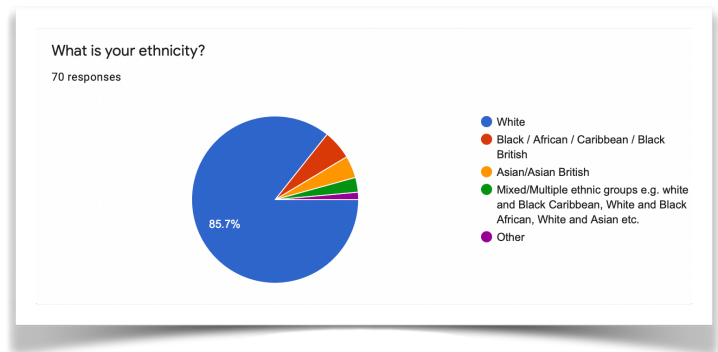
AGE RANGE.....

Through my findings I was able to get women from a wide age range to fill this questionnaire in. Most women that filled it in were between the ages of 25-50. Women aged 60+ were difficult to find but I guess that is to be expected! The amount of women particularly in full time ministry roles has definitely increased in the past 30 years. An interesting thing was that it was difficult to find women in ministry who were under the age of 25. This made me consider if we are willing to take a risk on young people, especially younger women? At my church, we took on a kids pastor at the age of 19 and got a lot of stick for it - she has turned out to be INCREDIBLE and people love her! We won't find these young people with the call of God on them unless we intentionally raise them so let's go find them!

ETHNICITY

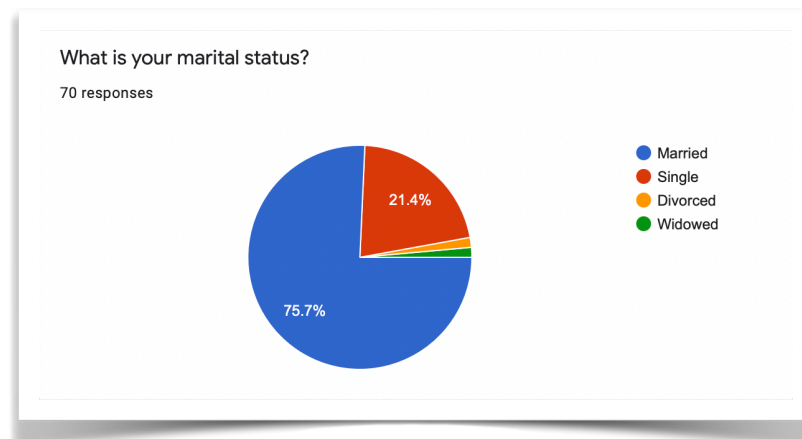
I found it exceptionally difficult to find women of colour who are leading in pastoral roles. This was of serious concern for me. I am in a church which is 70% black. Of the staff (both part and full time) there is only 1 black woman. On our board and leadership team there are no black women

even though a huge percentage of women are black who attend our church. I presume this is common as I found it hard to find black women to fill in this questionnaire. You will realise as I write this report that the common word is going to be 'intentionality.' Along this line, I want to encourage you to be **INTENTIONAL** about raising women of all races not just women who are the same as you. Jesus' church is not only filled with white faces.



MARITAL STATUS

1/4 of the people I interviewed were single including those who were widows or divorced. This raised some interesting questions and thoughts for me. *What are the unique challenges for single women in ministry? Do we ever consider this?* Now, I will admit this is something particularly on my heart as I am single and I know there are challenges I have faced that have been very difficult! An example would be that I have sat on multiple occasions on teams full of men and I have been



the only woman. I am aware that the relationships between the men on the team have been very strong but this has been more of a challenge for me. They may for example meet each other regularly outside of meetings where as that wouldn't be appropriate with me as a single woman. I have personally gone out of my way to build relationships with them and their wives so that it never felt or became awkward. It was the only way I could really get to know them in an appropriate way.

Couples don't often invite singles

out for dinner so I basically invited myself to help them not feel so awkward! This feels ridiculous as I write it but the reality is that this has been my life!! *For those women who are married, has it been a struggle for them to find who they are as a leader individually rather than hiding behind their husbands?* Now, I can't comment on this as much, but I have certainly seen this played out over the years where a woman has a strong leadership gift on her but she sat somewhere in the background because her husband is also a leader or seems to be the more natural person to take a lead. *For women who have children, how do they balance still being in ministry or being a leader and having children? How do they find their own path through this rather than feeling they have to be like another female leader?* These are all questions I have heard people ask which are attached to their marital status! I have a friend who is black, a single mum and a leader. Imagine the hurdles that she has to push through to be who she is called to be!

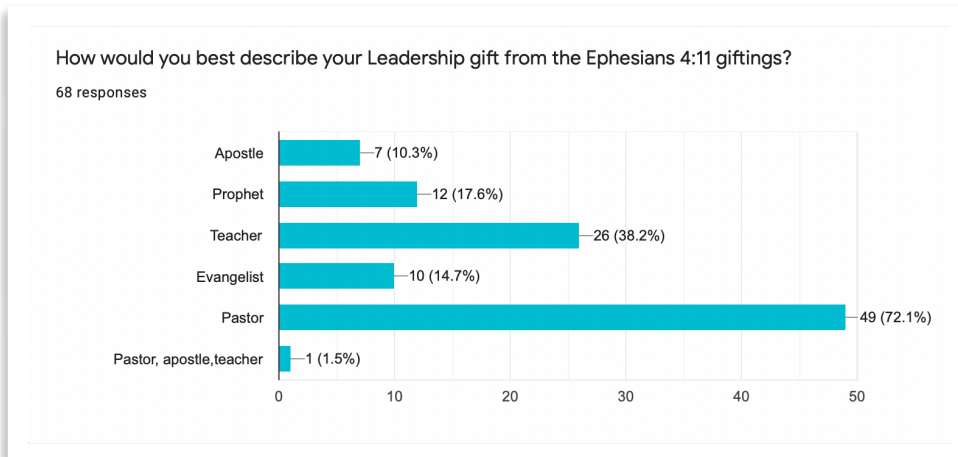
When did you know you had the ability to lead, when did you first have leadership responsibility and who gave it to you?

In some ways, the response to these questions did not surprise me! Most people knew they could lead and were given some responsibility as a teenager. Now, I'll mention here that for 15 years I was a youth pastor and you've heard it said, right, 'once a youth pastor, always a youth pastor?' This question emphasises the importance of youth ministry!!! And it would appear gender is not so much a big deal when you are a teenager in a church setting at least from my experience! It seems to be that things got harder the older we got and the higher we rose in leadership positions! The answer to these questions greatly encouraged me however as it would suggest most of us led because someone spotted us and believed in us as teenagers! Make sure you go and encourage the youth pastor in your church if you have read this and if you are a youth pastor - keep going!!!!

As for the final question, who gave you your responsibility, it worked out at about 70% was because of a man and 30% because of a woman. That means, men have a vital role to play or at least did in our stories, in the raising of us as female leaders. I know I am personally grateful for those men in my life, who saw potential in me, drew it out and allowed me to lead. Why not say thank you to whoever that guy was? It might really emphasise the point that in him choosing to intentionally (there's the word again) pour into you, it helped you break through barriers that may have been there otherwise.

Leadership Gifts

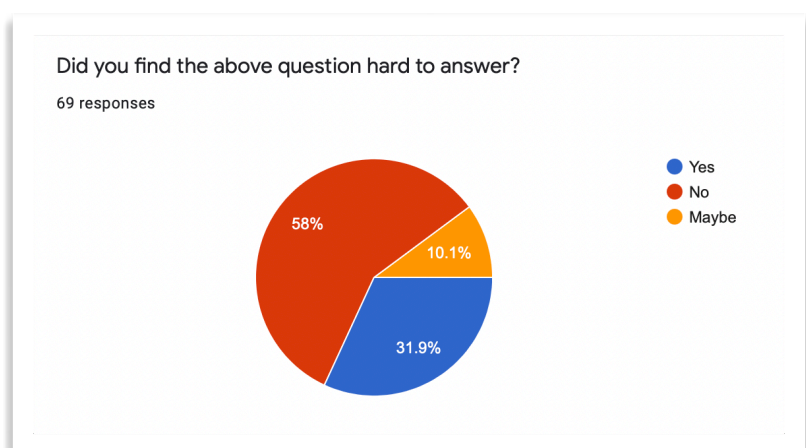
I found the answers to this part very interesting! If you remember I asked these three questions, 1. How would you describe your gifting according to the Ephesians 4:11 giftings, did you find that question hard to answer and how else would you describe your gifting?



Firstly, it was unsurprising to me that many women would describe their gifting as 'pastor,' Of course there are many people out there who have that gifting, both men and women, however I wonder if that, for many women, was the easiest answer to give? Women are often seen as the nurturing type but I wonder if we sell ourselves short by not

seeing ourselves as having other gifts? Or is it just that in the church setting we don't have many apostles and prophets? Or at least those gifts as women? Interestingly in the question that followed which asked 'how else would you describe your gifting?' many people put down answers that would explain the other gifts such as 'discerning', 'pioneer', 'equipping and inspiring others' 'strategy' 'clear thinking', 'leadership' etc.

Another interesting point from this area on leadership gifts was that many of us women do not feel confident about answering questions as to our gifting. Maybe this is why we feel so unsure how to define our gifts. I do believe if in church leadership settings, we could give leadership opportunity based on leadership gift rather than our sex, it may well help! One thing I want to encourage everyone in is to discover your gifting and then hone that gift so that you can become the best leader you can in the context of the church. Not for the sake of 'being the best' but so that we can reach as many people for Jesus as we can using the gifts God has given us! KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND WHO GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO BE!



A few details about the churches you come from...

The sizes of churches were completely varied which was good as it means I received a varied response to all of the questions.

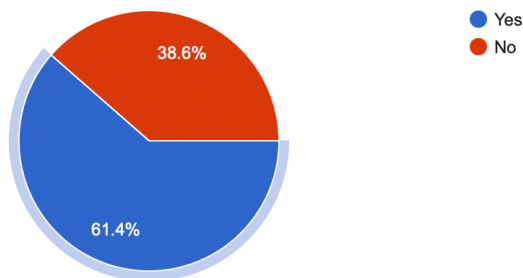
In terms of the representation of women in churches, this was fairly good. There are definitely women preaching and leading services in most of the churches represented here. What was

interesting was that there are hardly ever any female guest speakers - interesting! Maybe this is a challenge for churches? There are female leaders out there who are exceptional preachers. I think often it can be more common if a couple are invited to have the male preacher over the female. Maybe a challenge for churches to 'change the tide' would be to ask the woman to speak? (If of course she is a preacher....we're not doing this just for the sake of female representation!)

Your beliefs on women in leadership

Have you ever asked yourself, 'Can I really lead as a woman?'

70 responses



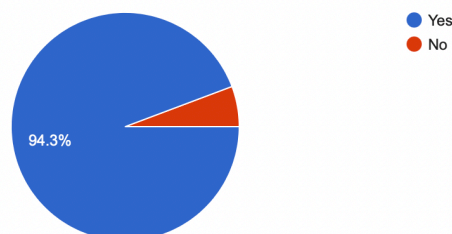
I do think the results from this question say everything!!! So many of us have asked ourselves this question, '*Can I really lead as a woman?*' I don't know about you but my hope is that every female leader that comes behind me will never ask that question, but will believe that they most certainly can lead and it has nothing to do with their sex! I hope this question will be eradicated! If you are someone who has asked yourself that question or continues to ask yourself, I want to encourage you to tell yourself every day that God has called you, He has

chosen you to serve Him! Just walk into your calling!!!

Most of us had heard someone speak on women in leadership and all of us believed a woman could be on a leadership or eldership team even though some who answered are in churches where they don't believe women should be elders. On the question about if a woman could be a senior pastor, most people said yes, although a few were unsure. I would be interested to know what made people unsure? (I guess I should have asked that question!!)

Have you ever encountered someone who believes women should not lead in the church?

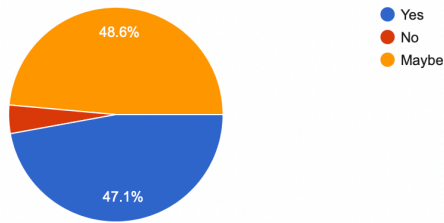
70 responses



I found it fascinating that about half of us were unsure about explaining what some of the Pauline letters say about women. I will admit that as a young person I just ignored them. Maybe because I had been given opportunity to lead so didn't feel the need to really understand. However I have dug a little deeper in more recent years to understand and in some ways validate why I can and should lead. There are some great books out there which I would highly

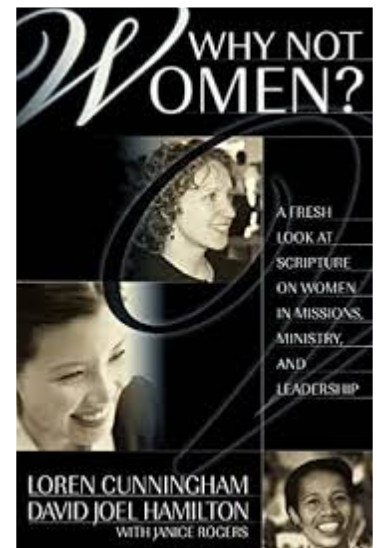
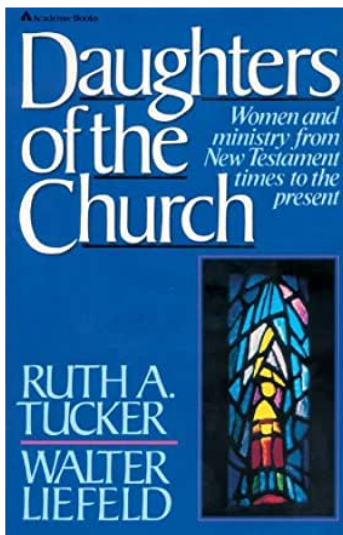
Do you feel you could easily explain some of the 'tricky' bible passages about women written in Paul's letters in the New Testament?

70 responses



recommend along this line. I do believe now its so important to understand why you believe what you do!!!

Unsurprisingly, nearly all of us have encountered someone who believes women should not lead in the church - oh dear! Sometimes I think how ridiculous this would be if we asked men the same question only 'have you ever encountered someone who thinks a man should not lead in the church?' They would laugh. I would also laugh while asking the question!



In terms of our theological standpoint on women in leadership most of us fit into points two and three - the categories which I have highlighted below....

Standpoint	Percentage
1. Extreme feminism/matriachal - women are superior to men, women are strong in their leadership, they tend to be married to a passive man. They should hold higher levels of leadership than men.	
2. Strong Egalitarian - men and women are fully equal in value and leadership opportunities based on individual gifting and calling. At home, men and women are equals with an emphasis on mutual submission and partnership. In church men and women are equal and able to fulfil all roles of leadership.	17.6%
3. Mild Egalitarian - men and women are equal partners in home, church and work. At home roles are based on personal giftedness and preference. A high sense of teamwork. At church, positions of leadership are open to both men and women. Women lead on their own merits and are not required to be married to a pastor have high levels of influence and authority.	79.4%

Standpoint	Percentage
4. Complementarian/egalitarian cross-over - men and woman are equal and have individual giftings that tend to be connected to gender. A preference for final male leadership or authority is common. Within church the highest levels of leadership are reserved for men. Women may preach but normally with the covering of men.	3%
5. Mild Complementarian - men and women are equal in value but have different primary roles. Women are seen as homemakers and the primary caregivers to children. Men are the primary breadwinners. In church, formal and high level leadership roles are reserved for men although women may freely lead other women or children. Churches where this is strong probably have a strong women's ministry programme where women can lead.	
6. Strong Complementarian - men and women are equal in value but different in their roles. A man's primary role is to be the breadwinner and a woman's primary role is to be submissive to her husband's leadership. At church men hold all roles of leadership and authority. Women are not allowed to teach and even in leading women's ministry this would have to be under the direction of a man.	
7. Men are superior to women and should lead in all areas of life. Women are in submissive roles in all aspects of home life and men in leadership roles. Within church men hold all leadership positions. Women should not work if she is married and especially if she has children. Some may even question her need for education.	
8. I have absolutely no idea!	

In terms of who influenced your belief on women in leadership this was very varied! However, the largest groups of people were;

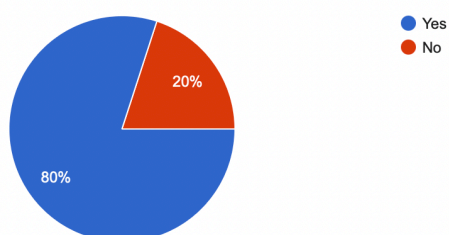
1. A male senior pastor
2. Dad
3. Female senior pastor

Can I just throw out there as an aside, a thank you to male senior pastors who are willing to believe in, call out gift, develop women and allow us to lead in the way God has called us to - we appreciate you. And to the Dads out there...ahh...if you know my story you'll know my Dad passed away a few years ago. I had the honour of serving with Him in our church. I am so grateful for Him because he encouraged me, believed in me and taught me to lead.

Looking Younger

Are you actively mentoring another female leader?

70 responses

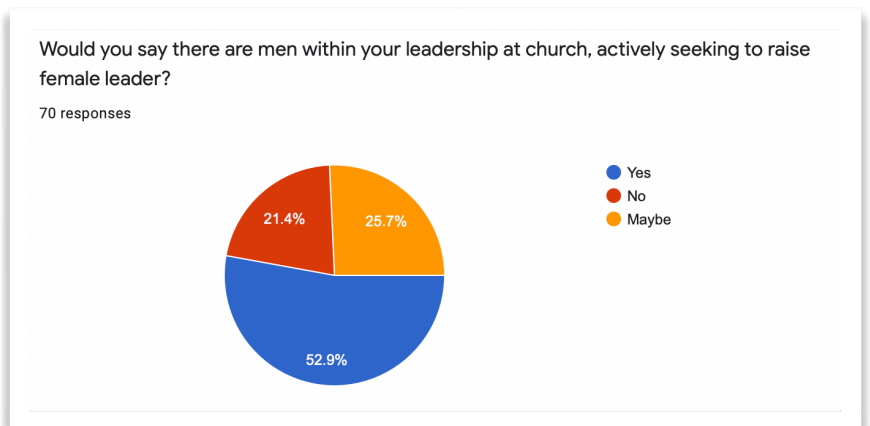


This whole section was really about encouraging us as women to ensure we are raising women who are coming through below us! This is so important!!! I am very passionate about this as I am sure you will know if you know me!

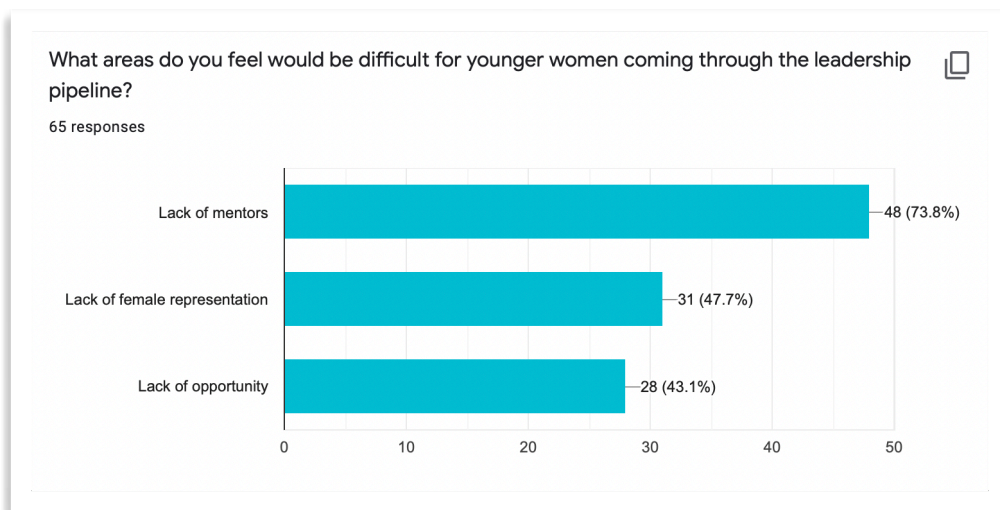
Can I encourage you again to be INTENTIONAL about this! Look around you, find some women who have potential to lead and spend time with them. Let them

watch you in different situations leading, ask them good questions to get them thinking, give them opportunities to lead, give them good feedback, don't be afraid to challenge, connect them to others who could help them grow further and be their biggest cheerleader! There are a few suggestions! Encourage the young woman you mentor to have someone younger than them that they are mentoring so that it doesn't just stop with them!

This next question was quite interesting. Although many of you said there was fair opportunity for a woman to lead, when it came to this question only just over half felt the men in the leadership were actively seeking to raise female leaders. Is this worth a conversation? Could you help your leadership team become a little more intentional about raising women to lead? Maybe this raises a wider question of how leaders are found and developed? If people just 'end up leading' then are women likely to just 'end up' especially if they are not close friends with the guy who is spotting them? How could you as a woman, especially if you are in a prominent leadership position, help and encourage the men around the table to see potential in women to lead?



61.4% of you said that if a woman felt the call of God on her life, she would come to you!! Have you thought through how you would encourage a woman who said that to you?



The above question for me including the question that followed on from this was probably the thing that stood out to me the most about the whole of this questionnaire. In many ways it probably wasn't a surprise. However I do have some thoughts from this. I do want to share some of the other most common responses on the difficulties....

- * there is lots of opportunity for women in kids and youth ministry but not in other areas of church.
- * Often, where there are many men in leadership roles, they tend to develop other men and so the women are left behind.
- * It is a struggle for women being able to lead because of the pressures of so many things to juggle - home life, kids, church, work etc.

- * Roles are often filled by married couples and so it can be hard for single women.
- * Women are less likely to push themselves forward where as men do this more so get more opportunities
- * Women have to prove themselves more to be taken seriously.
- * Subtle attitudes
- * Many churches have not thought through maternity procedures which can make things difficult for a woman when she becomes pregnant.

Lack of Mentors

There are so many things that could be said from the above. I will point out just a few things:

1. Are you mentoring anyone? Could you mentor some more women? Could you be the solution here? Maybe you could mentor a woman outside of your church context who doesn't have a mentor? Do you know anyone like that?

2. My good friend, Keely Morley who is a Senior Pastor is launching a leadership network for women called 'Rise Women.' One of the things this will do will open up opportunity for women to be mentored by great women that we know who are leading all around the country. Why not follow Rise Women on instagram and Facebook and soon there will be a website up and running.

Facebook: Rise Women

Instagram: risewomennetwork

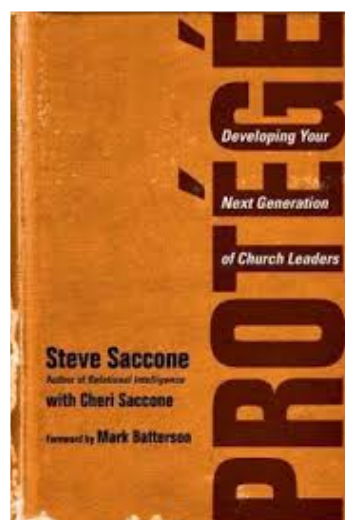
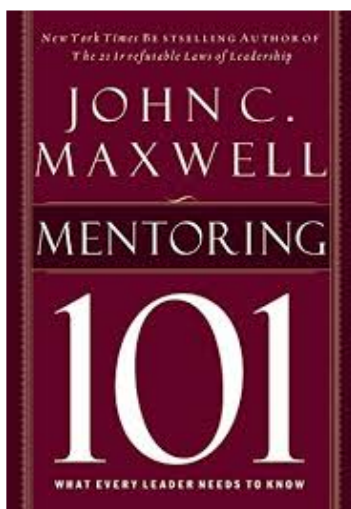
3. There are all sorts of ways to mentor people and it's something I'm passionate about and also try to learn more about. Here are a few books I have found to be hugely helpful along this topic:

RISE WOMEN

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Mentoring 101

Anything written by John Maxwell is amazing and this is specifically on mentoring. It gives some helpful tips on mentoring.



Protege

I use this book all the time for mentoring. I have found it to be one of the most helpful books to assist with mentoring. It goes through subjects such as character, communication, relationships, mission and entrepreneurial leadership. What is so helpful is that at the end of each chapter are some thoughts on extra ways to help the person you are mentoring and also some top tips on mentoring. Definitely worth reading!

Lack of Female Representation

This is definitely a challenge! All I can say is we have to be the change. We have to be brave enough to push through the difficulties and lead for the sake of future generations. One thing that I found helpful growing up was reading the

stories of women on the mission field. Although I still questioned if I should lead, I often remembered those stories, thinking, 'how am I different to them? They were normal women who just decided to go for it!' I'm currently writing the story of a woman in our church who went to The Congo and Rwanda and was on the mission field for 40 years as a single woman. She built (literally) churches, trained evangelists, trained teachers, escaped rebels who tried to kill her, was held under house arrest for 3 months without any guarantee of escape! Thousands have been changed through her life. Maybe you know similar women? If you do, write their stories, tell their stories and get groups of women to sit with them and learn from them. And ensure you live lives that make a difference!!!! Don't settle! Be who God has called you to be and REPRESENT! (P.s. look out for my book when it comes out....the story of my hero Kathleen is quite incredible!).

When it comes to a lack of opportunity, in many ways, this is so sad. Matthew 9:37-38 says, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

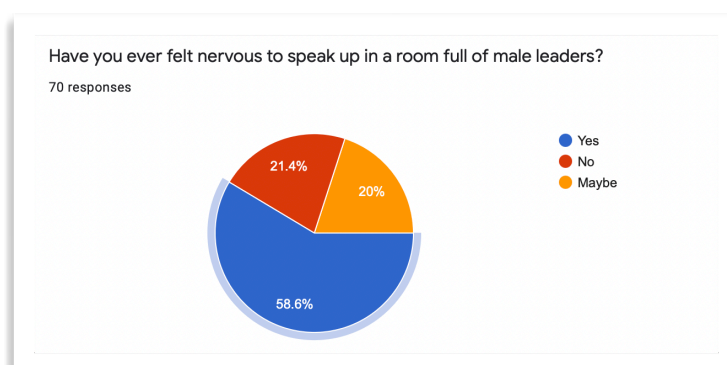
Maybe we have to make opportunity? I realise this may be easier said than done, especially if you are in a church that is not particularly forthcoming with allowing women to lead. I do want to encourage you if you are in a senior position in a church....create opportunity for women to lead. Do whatever you can!!! One thought on this, when you have had to fight to lead, you may feel like you don't want to let go of your position or may feel threatened by making space for others. Please don't do this. Make room. Make space for others! Think what you would have wanted someone to do for you and do that for them!

Lack of Opportunity

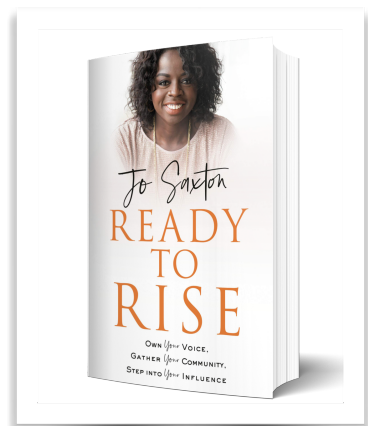
Challenges!

78.6% of you either have or may have felt nervous to speak up in a room full of male leaders!

What if you found your voice and helped others find theirs? Imagine the power!

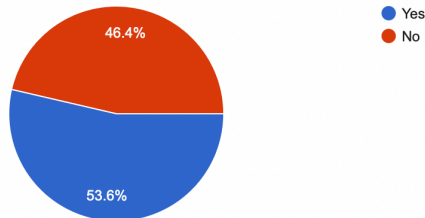


One great book I have read recently that really encouraged me personally when it came to 'finding my voice' was called 'Ready to Rise' by Jo Saxton. It has the tagline 'own your voice, gather your community, step into your influence' - powerful stuff!



Have you ever been called or have you felt it ever been implied that you are an 'emotional female?'

69 responses



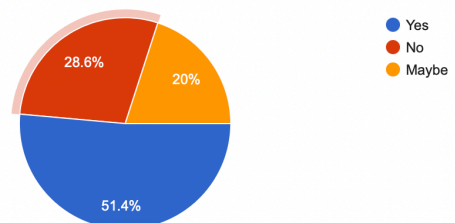
Oh dear.....lots of us have been told or it's been implied that we are 'emotional females.' I think this can often cause women to repress emotion and even put on a harsh stance to lead, which is so sad as we then start

becoming who we are not. Don't get me wrong there are times I need to calm down and not get too emotional over things but at times I wonder whether my passion is misinterpreted as 'being emotional' rather than showing passion in a feminine way? I think there needs to be greater conversation amongst leaders. If a man ever implies or calls you emotional, would you every (maybe at a later point) have a conversation about that comment and how it has affected you? The conversation may be hard but it might be worth bringing up for the sake of others?

Jealousy.....I guess this does often become a problem for women. I have recently been reading the story of Sarah & Hagar in Genesis and oh the jealousy spinning around is huge between these women! If you continue to read in Genesis you eventually come to Rachel & Leah which is a whole other story when it comes to jealousy!

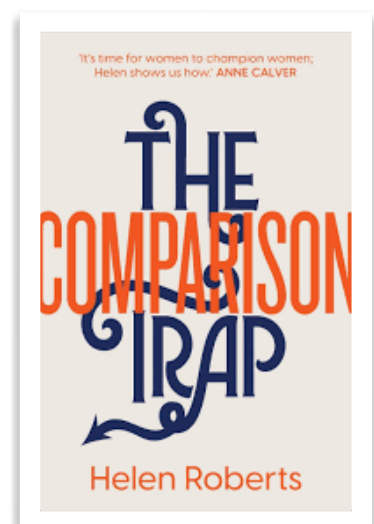
Have you ever felt that another female is jealous of you as a female leader?

70 responses



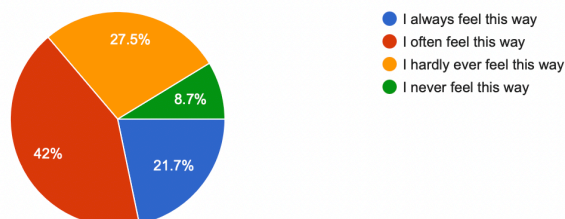
We have to fight against this. A few ways you can do this:

1. Encourage women coming through in leadership to do even more than you ever have!
2. When you see jealousy seeping in, go and do something to bless the person you are jealous of!
3. Here's a book that might help on this note by my friend Helen Roberts.



Do you ever feel pressured to 'look good' when leading in a visible way? - i.e be concerned with what you wear, ensuring you have makeup on and your hair is done etc.

69 responses



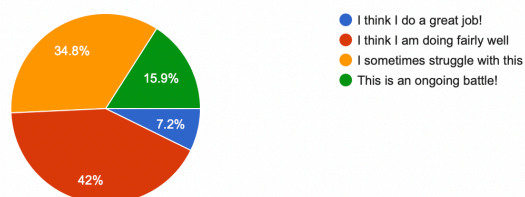
Do we feel pressured to look good? Well done to the people who never or hardly ever feel this way!!! I am not surprised that many of us often or always feel like this! I remember once preaching and someone putting up a photo of me after commenting on what I was wearing! I really hoped my preaching spoke to them too!!!! I guess the important thing to note is not to allow this to become too big an

issue. I don't think there's anything wrong with looking good but it's clearly not the most important thing!!!! If this is something you struggle with, maybe its worth talking to a trusted friend or mentor about this!

The question to do with juggling multiple responsibilities was really mixed too! I again think this is no surprise! We are all in different life stages. I know for me with lock down it has in certain ways been a dream but I often feel awful saying that to most of my friends who have kids!!! (Sorry!!!) I think the key thing here is to 'not do it alone!!!' There are women who have gone before you and had to work through some of this. I'll point you again to the 'Rise women leaders network' as I think these will be the type of questions we will speak through! One thing my mum, who is an amazing leader, always says is that it is so important to UNDERSTAND THE SEASON you are in. We don't permanently live in winter (thank goodness) like we don't permanently live in summer (unfortunately!)! I think sometimes as women because the opportunities don't come as easily as men we sometimes feel we have to ignore the seasons and try to do everything so we don't lose the opportunity. But God is big enough to bring opportunities around again so just trust Him and embrace the season!

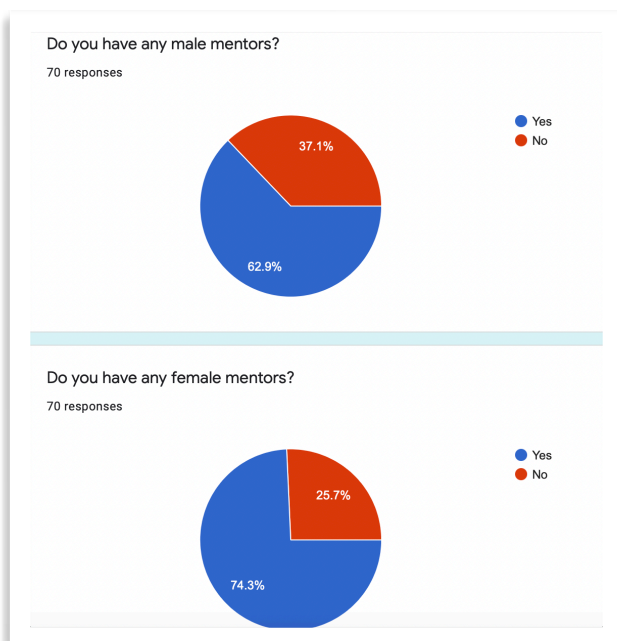
How well do you cope with the juggling of multiple responsibilities - e.g. work, home, family, friends etc.

69 responses



Personal Growth

I think the encouraging thing from the questions pertaining to mentors is that most of us do have people in our lives who are pouring into us whether they be men or women. I know for me personally I had clear male mentors growing up who helped me learn how to lead - my Dad who was my pastor was integral to my growth along with my Youth Pastor who was male, our associate Pastor who was male and many other men. I am grateful for them. However I always seemed to be on a search for a woman who I could connect with who inspired me and was where I hoped I would one day be. It took a lot of meeting with different woman to figure out who. Sometimes I met people and came away thinking 'I am nowhere near like them' and felt



disappointed that I had to continue searching. Eventually I met a great woman from a completely different country! (Oh dear!) I would take visits out there yearly to spend time with her, rub shoulders with her and ask lots of questions. I now FaceTime with her monthly which is a real blessing!

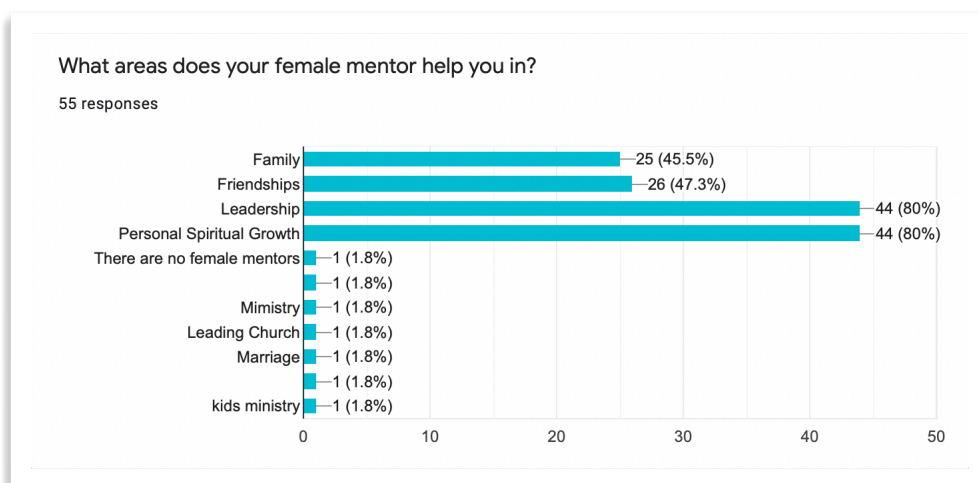
There are some great women out there. I think you just have to do the work of finding them and being brave enough to ask if you can take them out and ask a few questions (or zoom right now!!). That doesn't commit you into a life long mentoring relationship. You may meet the person and ask questions, learn some great things but decide to leave it as a 'one off' mentoring session or you may decide to ask if that person could meet you monthly for a year to help you. I would be surprised if someone said they didn't want to do that and to be honest if they did say that (unless it was a legitimate reason like they simply haven't got time) I would suggest they are probably not the best person to

meet. One hour a month is not going to take a great deal of their time!

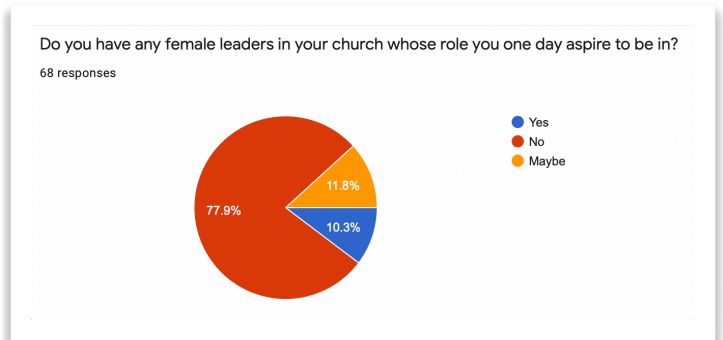
Another suggestion I would say along this line is to go into the meeting with a plan rather than expect them to lead. I had a FaceTime with someone recently who wanted to ask me questions and I was so impressed as they came prepared. At the start they told me they'd take no longer than 1 hour of my time and that there were three topics they would like to ask about. It really inspired me to be the same when I go to people for mentoring!

Another interesting response was in the area of how these female mentors help you. The answers were varied. I guess the reality is that we don't compartmentalise as much as men generally so this makes sense.

One thing I would say is to not be afraid to have a few mentors that help in different areas. You don't have to have a mentor for life!!! (They may not want you for life, haha!) As seasons change look for different people who could help you in different areas. It may also help the person mentoring to know what area you are wanting to grow in through your time with them. That clearly lays some boundaries and keeps your time focussed.



In many ways this next question was sad but unsurprising! All I can say from this is that YOU need to be the woman that other women aspire to be like! Do all you can to become the best person and leader you can so that if this question was asked 10 years from now 77.9% of women would say - YES!



Female preachers who inspire us

I will give a list of a few that people said. Maybe you could find them on YouTube so you can be inspired too!

- * Priscilla Shirer
- * Charlotte Gambil
- * Christine Caine
- * Lisa Harper
- * Jo Saxton
- * Denise Curgenvan
- * Danielle Strickland
- * Dawnchere Wilkerson
- * Sarah Jake Roberts
- * Jackie Hill Perry

There were of course many others! One thing I would say is of course be inspired but please be yourself! There is nothing worse than a preacher not being themselves! God will have given you a unique style and gifts of communication so embrace it and I am sure you will be more influential than if you just copied someone else!

Our greatest inspirations



Amy Carmichael
Missionary to India



Jackie Pullinger
Missionary to Hong Kong



Catherine Booth
Co-founder of the
Salvation Army



Rosa Parks
American Civil Rights
Activist



Corrie Ten Boom
Famous for
rescuing hundreds
of Jews during the
Holocaust



Gladys Alyward
Missionary to
China



Emily Pankhurst
Political activist

In no way does just showing a picture and putting who they were give justice to these incredible women who impacted history and so I would encourage you to read their stories and the stories of so many others. For many of the above women they were women of great faith, willing to put everything on the line to impact thousands, if not millions of people. There were obviously many women you mentioned who I have not put down but these were some of the ones who were mentioned multiple times. These were the stories I read growing up that inspired me to serve Jesus no matter the cost!

My next question was around leaders who inspire you in this country. I won't put their pictures here (they may not be too happy if I did this!) but I know I am grateful for them!!!! Maybe its worth taking some time to send a card or a text thanking some of the incredible women you know who have been an inspiration to you.

Some final thoughts...

This has been such a unique experience for me, both in the putting together of this questionnaire and being able to read through all of your answers and thoughts! Can I firstly say THANK YOU. Thank you for choosing to embrace who God has called you to be and leading. When I think of our churches, at least half are women and so it makes logical sense that women should be leading. As I have been on my own understanding of the scriptures in this area I am so grateful for the way Jesus constantly elevated the position of women. Think about the woman at the well... because of her encounter with Jesus she literally changed a town. Nothing could stop her sharing the story of what Jesus had done in her life!!! I do think we all have a responsibility especially as many of us who filled this questionnaire are in the unique positions of leading in church settings. We must be INTENTIONAL about believing in and developing young women who have the call of God around us. As an aside, I note that I often mention the importance of raising younger women. Please do not think I am excluding certain age groups....I guess a lot of what I do is with young women. There are women of all ages who have the ability to lead and influence in the Kingdom of God and we all have a responsibility to draw that out, give opportunity and encourage! Maybe after reading through some of my findings, you could make a plan of how you can be a bigger cheerleader to female leaders coming through? Maybe this could assist in creating conversation with male leaders. Please do with it as you wish! I just hope it will encourage and help you to step up and help others step up and be all God has called them to be.

I have finally put together some quotes from points you brought up and also below you will see some further book suggestions. Do get in contact if you would like to chat further or if there is anything else I can do to help and support you. My email is hannahwilliamson1984@outlook.com or you can find me at my blog which is at www.theleadershipjournal.co.uk.

I feel like I live in a privileged position with freedom and understanding of women in ministry and lots of encouragement but it was a long tough journey to get here.

I know God called me, if someone has an issue with that they need to talk to God. :o)

I feel very privileged to be in a generation that doesn't need to fight as hard as previous generations for female leadership gifts to be recognised. I know my experiences aren't universal, but I have never found that my gender has prevented me from growing in my gifts or accessing opportunities.

There have been many challenges over the years because I'm a woman in leadership. Things have changed a lot in the 19 years I've been employed in the church. I believe I'm part of a generation that are clearing the path for those younger women who are coming behind us. They won't have the same battles to fight. I pray that men and women will have opportunities in the church because of their gifting and calling and not marginalised because of gender.

Being a women in leadership has been an interesting journey to grow in, challenged in different ways by both men and women. Challenged to step up, step back and sometimes to just sit down and be quiet, balancing my thoughts and actions with the views of others, with the word of God and simply just how I felt directed by God. I hope I can equip others to be released quicker to discover God's plan and purpose.

I feel it is much easier to be 'boxed' as a woman than as a man. I also have come across a lot of unusual beliefs. For example a male leader said to me that he has said that he believes that women can be elders and leaders, but has told us that he thinks there shouldn't be as many as there are men.

