

A renewed sisterhood

Looking at women's ministries through a new lens

By Sarah Micula –

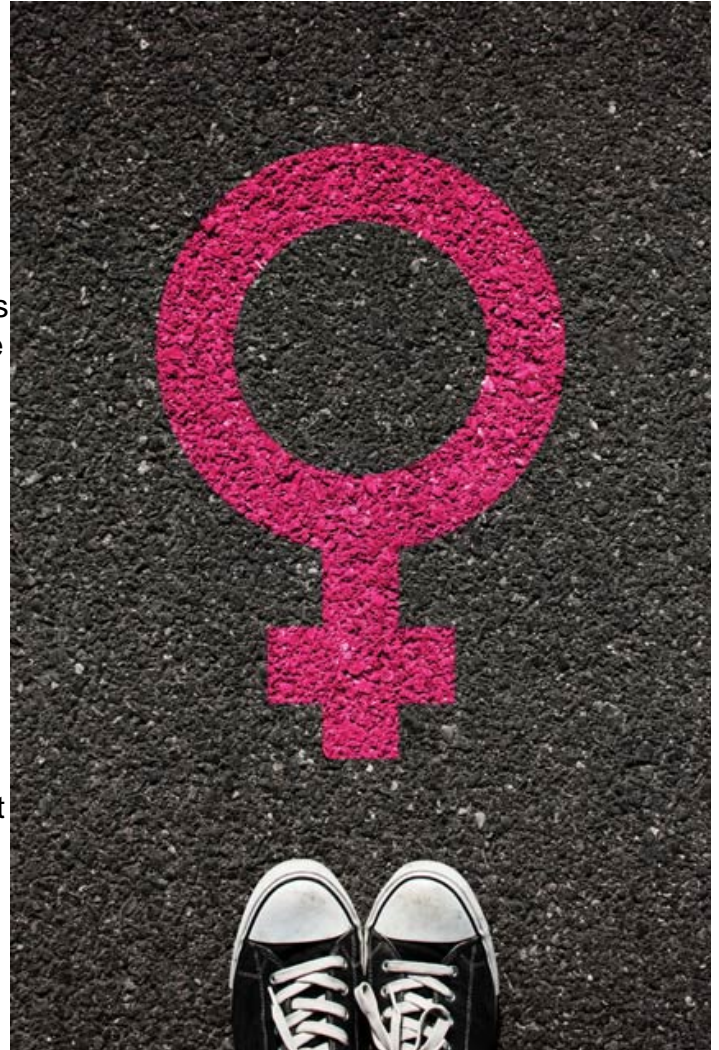
I didn't have a real problem with being single, but it was my reality during my twenties. A reality that puts you in a category, that clumps you with other people without spouses (*I'm so far from college now, why am I still in the college-age groups?*), that makes people sad for you, which makes the reality worse if you were indeed sad about it.

To be honest I was kind of sad. Or at the very least: confused, lonely, annoyed and sometimes angry about this reality. Angry and sad mainly at society and at church society for placing expected and assumed milestones on me, for deciding when I became an adult—based on my marital status, my home ownership, my children. Annoyed that I wasn't asked to make a dish for the baby or wedding shower at the corps. Could I not bake because I wasn't married? Because I never got the necessary gifts from a registry to have a functioning kitchen? Hurt because I wasn't in the small group with my peers because I didn't have the required spouse for admission. Angry and annoyed because it felt like others had a problem with my singleness.

No one, including myself, knew where to put me.

Clearly, some of these feelings were swirling out of control, spinning around in that spiral you create when you feel misunderstood. When your grievances begin to pile up, one after another, like a pile of books that have been stacked too high and eventually come crashing down. But the feelings and hurt are real and they are common for a lot of us. If the church and society chose to use this milestone structure into adulthood—where do I fit in?

When I stopped examining the things I wasn't or the things I hadn't done, I chose to focus on what I was. It wasn't a revelation that I was a woman, but in a way it was. My gender was a defining fact in



my identity. Being placed in a category because of my gender, I was okay with, that made sense to me. Soon after, a light bulb went off: women's ministries. That is where I *should* fit in in the Christian community. But Home League was all I really knew of women's ministries.

I pondered what this looked like or could look like for me. I was looking for community, I was looking for *sisterhood*. I decided that this is where I wanted to find it. I wanted to be around women my age, women younger than me, women older than me. I wanted to hear their stories, how they got here, what formed them, what worked for them, what didn't. But finding my peers in women's ministries was a challenge. I longed to lock arms with the "girls" around me, moving forward to be the next generation while learning from and holding the hands of those who cleared the path for us. I desired a place for us to talk about the role of women in the church, to find accountability, to be an encourager, to be taught, to laugh, to feel safe, to teach, to grow up—*together*.

Those things are happening in women's ministries groups, but not with many women my age. And yes, those relationships do exist outside of women's ministries. But if we don't intentionally connect, especially with those we wouldn't normally, someone will get left behind. Someone is already getting left out. Is it you? You can't force friendships but you can create a space where friendship can be made. (But you have to show up—that, I feel, I cannot stress enough. Please, show up.) I believe that is what women's ministries is. It's a place for creating and solidifying friendships. That's not what it can be, but what it is, you just have to show up.

I share all these personal details of my journey into women's ministries because I don't feel like I'm alone in this. I think other women have felt disconnected and alone in church. Segregated because of what has been set up in our church society and culture or even by our own fears. Whatever has kept us separated—age, marriage, motherhood, insecurities, fears—let's remember all the things we do have in common and push ahead as sisters with that common purpose.

Joining the Territorial Women's Ministries Department as a program specialist focusing on social media, young women and missions was a collision of ministries that I know and love. More than just being a person who just conquered (now that it's over I'm claiming those years as a victory) their twenties, I led the young adult small group at my corps for a number of years, experiencing firsthand the labor of love this group of lovely, fickle, needy, removed, hilarious, adventurous and ambitious people it can be. I've helped train more mission teams than I can recall and led and been a part of over 10 teams during my five years in the World Missions Department. That's also where I got my feet wet in social media branding and strategizing.

Now that I'm here in this role, I just want to join in. I want to learn from what's already happening and I want to contribute from what I know and have tried with the young adult groups I've led and the things I'm trying in the women's ministries position at my own corps. I do have things to share, but I have much to learn from those who been at it for years. I want to lock arms and hold hands with the women around me, pushing forward together, inter-generationally uniting and loving each other, growing up and teaching each other, together as sisters and daughters of the Most High King. Will you show up?

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