

**BOOK**

*Developing Female Leaders: Navigate the Minefields and Release the Potential of Women in Your Church*

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**SYNOPSIS [From the publisher]**

What would your church look like in the future if it were to maximize the dormant gifts of the women God has brought there? In *Developing Female Leaders*, Kadi Cole, twenty-year veteran in leadership and people development, offers a practical strategy to help church and organizational leaders craft cultures that facilitate the development of women as volunteer and staff leaders.

Using interviews and surveys of more than one thousand women in key church and organizational roles, combined with current research, the author has created eight easy-to-implement “best practices” that help accelerate a woman’s organizational contribution.

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“You have really nice birthing hips.” That was my introduction to ministry leadership as a female.

“I am not the only one with these kinds of stories. In fact, the more female ministry leaders I meet, the more incredible stories I hear. Some are hilarious, some are ridiculous, and some will make you cry. There is great power in remembering and sharing our experiences – especially for young leaders coming behind us.”

“But here’s what I have come to realize: they meant well, but they simply did not know what they did not know. I am calling it “lovingly ignorant.” How could these leaders be expected to do things differently if they did not understand why these perspectives and actions are not helpful?”

“Another male executive pastor put it this way: ‘There are all these talented women in our congregation, but it’s like they can’t break through, even as volunteers. We want them to, but we just can’t seem to figure it out. I come from the corporate world, and this is just baffling to me.’”

“You have to learn what many of the women in your congregation are battling internally so you can encourage and challenge them in the right ways.”

“Wherever she adopted hers, the effects of these messages over decades greatly influence what a developing female leader thinks about herself, how she can please God, and what she can offer in service at her church.”

“These women didn’t know they should not pursue a job or role that seemed interesting to them. They watched leaders around them, and rather than seeing gender, they saw gifting, passion, and abilities. These were the items they used as the basis for deciding if the role would be a good fit for them or not. The question was never, “Will I be allowed?”; it was always, “Do I want to try this?” or “Is this a good fit for me?”

-Before 1920 a woman could not vote in America.

-Before 1963 it was legal to pay a woman less than a man for equal work (at the time women were paid 41 percent less in the same job).

-Before 1974 a woman could not apply for a credit card without a husband or father as a cosigner.

-Before 1975 there were states where women could not serve on juries.

-Before 1978 a woman could lose her job for becoming pregnant.

-Before 1980 there was no definition for sexual harassment and therefore no way for a woman to be protected, especially in her workplace.

“If the women in your church are hesitant to step into higher leadership roles, accept a specific title, or take a seat at the table, there’s a good reason. As you come alongside a woman, ask questions, listen, and learn about her unique viewpoint, you’ll be able to uncover any misconceptions that are holding her back. You also hold incredible power to help her see herself differently, realize the potential that she does have, and open doors of opportunity that she might not otherwise know exist for her.”

“Perfectionistic tendencies get in the way all the time for women, especially when it comes to appearances. We are conditioned to believe this is where much of our worth is derived. Why couldn’t I just be confident in myself and authentically connect with these fellow leaders? Did they actually care about (or even notice) what I was wearing?”

“For a woman who is trying to lead in a church setting, these issues of clarity are often compounded by mixed messages about what, how, and whom she is allowed to lead.”

“It is also discriminatory to pay a woman less because she is not the “breadwinner” of her home or based solely on her gender.”

“Women tend to be less stringent about boundaries than men, especially if they are new to a job, so they can fall into the trap of doing more than is being asked of them. It is critical to clarify your expectations, help them know what a “win” looks like for them, and free them from feeling obligated to attend every single thing that happens at the church.”

“You cannot impart what you do not possess. You cannot preach with power what you are not practicing with integrity.”

“When men are successful in business and have a strong spiritual foundation, they easily thrive in ministry. Many women have not had opportunities to lead, so they start out at a different level. Even with a spiritual gift of leadership, it takes more time to move into a leadership position.”

“It is critical to the spiritual development of female leaders to help them learn and practice the difference between minimizing themselves or living in fear and having a whole, healthy identity that gives God the glory while celebrating their amazing achievements.”

“Because if you cry to a man, you will undo them. They may give you what you want momentarily, but they won’t be able to really look at you and hear what you have to say. They are not trying to hurt your feelings if they disagree with you. And if you cry, or if you shirk back, or if you power down, they’re going to think that’s a character or leadership flaw.”

“When listening to another person, women tend to give many cues that they are paying attention and “tracking” with what is being said. Cues include engaged eye contact, smiling, nodding consistently, and soft verbal affirmations such as “uh-huh,” “yes,” and “gotcha.” Men, on the other hand, tend to give minimal cues while listening. They may stop eye contact in order to look away and concentrate on what the person is saying. They rarely nod or give verbal affirmation.’

“As a woman is speaking, she will often misunderstand a man’s lack of eye contact and stoic facial expressions as a message that he doesn’t care about what she is saying or that he isn’t listening. This will often cause her to talk more or feel the need to make her case stronger with even more details and data. Or she might pull back and not give her full viewpoint because she thinks he is not tracking with what she is saying.”

“Men tend to interrupt to gain control over the dialogue or to turn the conversation in a specific direction. Women, on the other hand, tend to interrupt to create connection and confirm understanding.”

“As leaders move up within an organization, their future opportunities begin to rely more on one’s perceived ability to lead the organization, not just lead people. There are three primary categories of leadership: (1) your personal expertise, (2) bringing out the best in others, and (3) business, strategic, and financial acumen. For women, that last one-third (or 33 percent) is often grossly undeveloped.”

“Minorities, women, and people of color need sponsorship most, at every career transition point.”

“Women are four times less likely to ask for a raise, even though they earn an average of 22 percent less than men for the same jobs.”

“Minority employees who have a sponsor are 65 percent more likely than their unsponsored peers to be satisfied with their rate of advancement.”

“One of the biggest challenges of developing female leaders in our churches is that most of the “others” on our leadership teams are male and, in the context of this conversation, the protégés are female. A male mentor investing in growing a female leader is no small task in the church world. Besides the basic gender differences, the relational and potentially romantic tensions are real and a very big issue. We have all been affected by the heartbreaking news that a church has gone through a leadership crisis because of an inappropriate relationship. It is crushing every time for the church, the people personally involved, and the church’s reputation in the community, as well as having a lifelong impact on its youth and young believers.”

“As a single woman, I was treated as something to be feared, that I was out to find a man at all costs. I would like to be married and have a family, but it is not my all-consuming call. Many of my male colleagues did not see it that way and treated me accordingly.”

“The Billy Graham Rules didn’t start out with that name, nor did they have anything to do with women working in church leadership.”

“Many have forgotten that discipleship and leadership are not the same thing . . . In discipleship relationships, we are all equal. There is true community. We are all sinners, and no one person is better than anyone else.”

“There is a fear, especially for Christian women, of being labeled ‘feminist.’”

“While church leadership cannot directly influence the choices of congregants who show preference to male staff members, they need to be aware of how these inconsistencies affect female leaders and consider how they might be able to model equitable support and appreciation, as well as use their influence to make sure everyone on their staff is recognized and appreciated by their church family.”

“We work very hard to make sure that we don’t just say that balancing life and family are very important to us, but we create the culture for it.”

“Introductions for male leaders often set them up to have influence, as they are often automatically introduced with information about their accomplishments, past performance, tangible results, and drive. Women leaders, on the other hand, are more commonly introduced by their personality, their relationships (whom they are married to or friends with), their outward appearance, and their teamwork abilities. Both are true, but unfortunately, this unintentionally sets a woman up to have to prove her ability and competency before she can actually begin leading. Choosing our words carefully and focusing on a female leader’s accomplishments, independence, and initiative will set her up to lead well from the start.”

As Verna Myers said, “Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”

One simple way to bring awareness to the value of women is to include female biblical characters in your sermons. In my early twenties I started reading through the Bible every year. One of the most amazing realizations for me was how many incredible women are in Scripture. They led, they taught, they judged, they inspired, they failed, they influenced, they problem-solved, they disciplined, and they were often hand-selected by God to be used in powerful and strategic ways. But for some reason, in most of the churches I’ve attended, they are rarely preached about.

“The organizational reality is that if you are visible, people assume you are a leader. Visibility on the weekend stage is a critical tool in communicating authority. When you extend the influence of the platform, you extend the influence of your leaders.”