



Leading Ladies

**Willing Hearts,
Willing Hands**



Teresa Hampton



**Foreword by
Jane McWhorter**

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To my mother,
Mildred Davidson Chester,
who, as a young bride,
began to lead her family toward God.
Her quiet persistence in faithful worship
eventually led her husband to obey the Lord.
He was just the first of many.
She continues to inspire me daily
to grow as a true servant
of Jesus Christ.

Also to the many women
who have touched my life
with their wisdom, courage, and strength:
my "Aunt" Evelyn Crowell,
Cathy McGaughy,
Pheobie Slocum,
Elaine Teffeteller,
Jane McWhorter,
and so many others
who have shown leadership
in its purest form!





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FOREWORD

Women have always had a very special place in the Lord's work. The threads of God-ordained male spiritual leadership run throughout the Bible, as God has continually set divine parameters during the Patriarchal, Mosaical, and Christian ages. Many discussions relating to woman's role in the work of the church today, however, seem to focus only on the restrictions God has ordained while failing to accentuate the many positive, unquestionable areas of service open to women.

Negative goodness is not good enough. Simply refraining from participating in restricted areas is not pleasing in God's sight. He also wants women who are busy doing what they should do in the kingdom.

More than half the membership in nearly any congregation is composed of females. Most of these women want to use their talents to the glory of God but often lack direction. We need female leadership in the church—women who are willing to lead other women in doing what is pleasing in God's sight.

The tapestry depicting the divine scheme of roles would sorely be lacking in beauty and strength if it were only composed of the needed sturdy threads of male spiritual leadership. The golden strands of feminine talents are intertwined with masculine abilities throughout the pages of inspiration. The tapestry would be lacking both in beauty



and in strength without the suitable blending of these contrasting threads.

A man brings his natural strengths and weaknesses to the service of God, and a woman brings hers. She is strong in many areas in which a man is weak, and his strengths stand in sharp contrast to her weaknesses. Together, they constitute a mighty team in the kingdom.

In the writing of this book, Teresa Hampton performs a real act of service for Christian women. In her refreshing literary style, she traces the golden thread of female roles throughout the Scriptures. If women are going to work effectively, they need female leadership. That kind of leadership must be developed if it is to be effective.

I invite you, the reader, to join Teresa in this vital study.

—Jane McWhorter



Chapter One

WHAT LEADERSHIP IS NOT

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'"

—Revelation 14:13

The old country church, nestled in the back roads of Tennessee, was devoid of modern furnishings. Fold-down, wooden seats braced the faithful as they poured out their hearts to the Lord. Funeral-home fans, combatting the sweltering August heat, pushed a cappella choruses heavenward. And God listened. He listened as His people praised Him.

My childhood years of five through about twelve were spent mostly at this little building, because my parents believed if the doors were open we should be there. While the building itself holds many memories, the people are etched into the warmest part of my heart.

One old gentleman loved to lead the singing. He always chose the same three songs and in the same order. As he led me and the others in song he would often look to the rafters as if he were looking right into Heaven. I felt that this man really, personally knew God. I remember that now and smile, especially when I'm singing one of "his" songs during worship.



An elder of the church and his wife, advancing in years, helped each other into the building and you could set your watch by them. Usually he took her arm or elbow and cared for his little bride as if he were handling gold. I can still see them sitting together in the seat that everyone knew was *theirs*. Both led others, he openly and she in quiet but powerful ways.

Another special memory is the sense of family that this small group of people engendered. I called one particular lady “Aunt Evelyn,” although she was not in the least related to me. Her husband was another “uncle.” Their girls were about ten years older than I, so I looked to them, trying to emulate every hairstyle, fashion, or gesture. I admired their mother, my adopted aunt, who took an active lead in teaching women and children. She made me feel special. But her leadership did not begin and end with the church. You see, she and her husband owned the little store that was positioned a few yards from the church building and her influence was felt in the community at large. This woman, through her example, led my mother to be active in the church and to lead in the community. She also led me.

I can also, in my mind’s eye, see my grandmother. She was a widow who had experienced hard times through the depression. She sat uncomfortably in the old seats, but was thrilled to be “meeting with the saints.” I remember one time, though, when she wept openly as the preacher spoke of Jesus and His death on the cross. In her home, in her poverty, she was devoted to her grandchildren. With an unreal measure of patience she drew countless pictures of Bible characters. We colored her drawings as she told us stories of the great heroes of old. Many times she drew and spoke to me from her bed. Her memory leads me today.

A young college-aged woman taught my fourth-grade class during Bible school. I shall never forget her courage. We were a handful. One Sunday in particular, she left the



little white church building in tears. When my mother found out how we had disrupted the class—and she *always* found out—she made me apologize to the young teacher the following Sunday . . . in front of the entire class! Though many had participated in the crime, I was the only one whose mother had chosen public humiliation as part of the punishment. That morning it was my turn for tears. A year or so later, I received a letter from that teacher in which she commended me for putting on Christ in baptism. I still have that letter.

When you hear the word *leadership*, what words immediately come to mind? Possibly adjectives like strong, capable, busy, energetic, enthusiastic, or attractive. But do these words ever surface: quiet, single, divorced, young, old, or plain? I must admit that I came into the study of leadership having forgotten some of those childhood memories. I had allowed the world to shape my thoughts of a leader.

Are you like me? Do you have some preconceived ideas of leadership, some of which may be true while others may be misconceptions? It is my sincere hope, as we study this important topic, that as women of God, we will take a fresh look at the topic of female leadership which affects literally every aspect of our lives: our homes, the church, and our communities. Perhaps you will, like me, open the doors to your memory closet and reacquaint yourself with characters who have influenced you to lead.

I was first prompted to study this subject deeply because I was asked to speak during a seminar in the lovely state of Colorado. (Nothing makes a person study quite like the anxiety over an upcoming speaking engagement!) Until then, I had given leadership only a cursory examination. Now I was determined to look not only at the lives of biblical female leaders but to biblical male leaders as well. Another goal was to combine precious morsels from God's word with pearls of wisdom gleaned from women and men



who daily enrich my life through word or deed. The subject of women's leadership deserved more than a brief look—it deserved an intense study.

So, in preparation for the seminar, and for my own personal enrichment, I began to search diligently, first looking to see what God said concerning this topic, and then looking to what men and women could offer the study. Going to the dictionary, I found that Webster defines leadership as “the office or position of a leader, or the capacity to lead.” The definition of *leader*, however, is not so concise. For the purposes of this study, let us define a leader as a guide or conductor.

Several concepts began to grow in my own mind as I drew from twenty-six years as the wife of a minister. I began to jot down my own thoughts in outline form, collect material from other sources, and pass out an informal questionnaire to women of varying ages and stations in life. One idea became apparent early on as I spoke to women. They were very vocal about the prevailing *misconceptions* of leadership. In fact, being honest with myself, I confess that I had some misconceptions as well.

Misconception number one: A good leader must be an extrovert or have an outgoing personality. *Nothing could be further from the truth!* John Maxwell, in his book, *Developing the Leader Within You*, says,

Sociologists tell us that even the most introverted individual will influence ten thousand other people during his or her lifetime! . . . That means that all of us are leading in some areas, while in other areas we are being led. No one is excluded from being a leader or a follower. Realizing your potential as a leader is your responsibility (page 2).

As I opened God's word, I discovered Peter's intriguing admonition to women who are married to unbelievers. “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, *without a word*, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they ob-



serve your chaste conduct accompanied by fear” (1 Peter 3:1–2). I know of countless quiet servants who faithfully worshiped God, cared for those in need, and lived chaste Christian lives. These virtuous women eventually led their husbands to obey Christ! If a woman has the ability to lead without speaking a word, then obviously leadership is not confined to those who have outgoing personalities.

I have found through the years that quiet people make great leaders *if they have a willing heart*. The introvert usually has finely tuned skills, like listening and organization, which greatly benefit the role of a leader. An outgoing talker has her own obstacles to overcome. She may occasionally have trouble controlling her tongue, whereas the quiet person usually measures her words. The more you open your mouth, the greater opportunity you have to insert your foot. Right? Sometimes what may initially be viewed as an advantage, the gift of gab, becomes a hindrance. While an outgoing personality can assist a woman as she leads others, great listening skills may assist the quiet leader. Being an extrovert is not a prerequisite to effective leadership.

Misconception number two: A good leader must have an active, supportive spouse. *Not true!* In reality, many great leaders began in their youth as a single person, taking leadership roles with success. Miriam was young but with courage assisted in the salvation of her baby brother, Moses. Esther’s leadership began when she was a young virgin taken as the queen of a heathen king. As will be seen in a later chapter, she became a dynamic leader of the Jews in a foreign land.

The righteous woman Abigail was married to an ill-tempered drunkard named Nabal (1 Samuel 25). When she realized her husband had insulted David, the hero of the Israelites, she went quickly to work providing food for David’s starving army. As she approached David she admitted to him that her husband had acted rudely. Her ad-



mission quieted his anger. He made note that her wisdom and bravery had kept him from killing her husband. Abigail returned to her husband. The next morning, when she told Nabal what he had done in a drunken stupor, “his heart died within him, and he became like a stone” (verse 37). When David heard of Nabal’s untimely demise he took Abigail as his wife!

In addition to being young and single, many women find themselves “single again” following a divorce or the death of their husband. Do these circumstances of life bring a woman’s leadership to a close? The answer is simply, only if she chooses not to lead. Some of the most powerful leaders in the church are widows who practice true Christianity by actively teaching others, whether children or adults, coordinating food groups to assist those who are ill or grieving, and preparing flowers to brighten the hearts of the lonely. The list could go on and on. While it is true that having an active, supportive spouse may facilitate the role of female leadership, it is not essential. Young, single, or single again, women have the ability to actively lead others.

Misconception number three: Leadership positions are best suited for those of a particular age; the age varies depending on the person to whom you are talking. *This concept is false!* Leadership positions are suited to any age. A woman may lead effectively as a young person still pursuing an education, as a new bride, as a young mother with babies tugging on her skirt, as a mother with teens, as a woman experiencing an empty nest, as a grandmother, or as a widow.

God’s Word is filled with examples of men and women of all ages who led others with success. David, a young man of about seventeen, rose against Goliath. His brothers scorned his youth, saying he should be back with the few sheep. Humbly, David announced that his strength lay not in himself but in the Lord. God gave him the victory! Ridicule may come to the young who desire to lead, but



most young people will receive praise for going against the flow in order to lead others. Indeed, the young deliverer David was praised after defeating the giant and is praised today by those who know his story. Additionally, we read of courageous and strong women who held various occupations as they successfully led others, from the virtuous woman's real estate endeavors to Priscilla's tent making. Naomi, an aging widow, brought her daughter-in-law into fellowship with the nation of Israel and became great-great-grandmother to the second king of Israel.

Aside from parenting, the role of grandparents is one of the most influential in the lives of children. Many a grandmother has been responsible for successfully leading a child to know God's will and to obey Him. Sometimes results are not achieved quickly, as seen in the article by Traci Paseur at the close of this chapter. Seeds are planted, however, and God gives the increase. Never underestimate the power of a grandmother.

Teenage girls may lead. Young mothers may lead. Those with an empty nest may lead. Grandmothers may lead. Some of these women may indeed have more time to devote to the more visible leadership positions than others, but all may serve in various ways to the extent of their abilities. The evidence is in. Age is not a factor. However, willingness is a major factor in this commodity called leadership.

Misconception number four: External attributes like beauty and grace make or break a good leader. *False, false, false!* Beauty is used to sell everything today, so why not leadership as well? This is a lie that Satan has used throughout the years and society has bought into it, as my grandmother would say, "lock, stock, and barrel." The Israelites were no exception. They looked around and saw that all the surrounding countries had kings while they merely had an old judge, Samuel. So they went to him and requested a replacement, Samuel's replacement. A king would



be a strong presence among the nations, they reasoned. A king would fight their battles! Samuel warned that while a king might do those things, he would also tax them heavily in order to pay his soldiers. He would draft their sons into his armies. He would take their daughters to make his perfumes and to bake. He would take their cattle and lands.

Despite Samuel's warning, the people would not listen and said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1 Samuel 8:19–20). God gave the people what they wanted. When the people were presented with their king, they were entranced. He must have been a statuesque fellow as he stood a head taller than all others. The people shouted, "Long live the king!"

The honeymoon did not last long, however. Saul proved to be a disappointment. His strong physique and kingly presence could not mask his lack of character. Samuel was asked by the Lord to anoint a second king and, as he narrowed the choice down to the sons of Jesse, he felt sure that Eliab, the oldest son who looked like a king, must be the one God had chosen. But God told Samuel,

Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

The world may desire beauty and grace in those who lead, but we should heed God's warning to Samuel and the Israelites. The package does not make a good leader. Instead of the infamous question, "Who's the fairest of them all?" women who desire leadership roles should be asking themselves, "Is my heart right with God?"

Opening my mind and heart to the study of leadership, I was drawn to childhood memories of the little white church in the woods. I remembered men and women who led in various ways accordingly to their abilities and



strengths. Do you have such recollections as well? Their memory compels me to set aside misconceptions of leadership. Knowledge that comes through the study of God's Word compels me to discard the worldly "shape" of leadership.

A good leader does not have to be an extrovert or have an outgoing personality. I remember the gentleman who led singing as he looked upward and the little old lady who quietly served as an elder's wife. Quiet individuals make great leaders if they have a willing heart.

With or without a spouse—young, single, or single again—women have the ability to actively lead others. I remember my adopted aunt and her ready heart, eager to serve in the church and in the community. Willingness is a major factor in the ability to lead others.

Leadership positions are suited for those of any age. I remember my widowed grandmother who steadfastly worshiped, although in poor health, and taught her grandchildren even on days when she was bedridden. Just as John the revelator wrote about those who die in the Lord, her works of leadership follow her—they do not die with her (Revelation 14:13).

Finally, I am reminded that though the world may choose a certain type of leader, one that looks the part, a true leader may emerge from a young shepherd boy, or from a frightened young woman who has taken on her first Bible class. While the world has this strange love/hate fascination and preoccupation with beauty, God is always looking for individuals with pure hearts who are willing to lead.



Where Have the Grandmothers Gone?
(Traci Paseur)

The year 2000 is now twenty-four days old. What modern times we live in . . . and my, how these times have changed. I have a birthday approaching and my age is so very insignificant. It doesn't matter because times have changed and I find it discouraging.

I was raised in the church and am so very grateful that my grandmother made a way of life for me. Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, and Wednesday nights were for worship. No questions asked. As a child, I willingly admit to that burst of excitement if for one reason or another we didn't go to church. But for the most part, my childhood days of worship were happy times and I felt the comfort of God's word even then. Sunday afternoons were spent around the dinner table enjoying a wonderful meal that my grandmother had prepared. During those days, you didn't dare take a bite until the blessing was said. I've seen my grandmother give thanks over a bowl of beans and a piece of cornbread. Where have the blessings gone? I ask because I don't know. Maybe we don't want to offend anyone by offering a blessing and we don't want to embarrass ourselves shamefully by doing the honor of giving thanks. We should give thanks that we even have the opportunity to give thanks.

I just can't remember a day that I spent with my grandmother when she didn't refer to God and His glory. I remember, not so long ago, driving with my grandmother on a beautiful fall afternoon. The leaves were turning their beautiful shades of orange and red and my grandmother said, "Only God can make a tree." Of course, I had noticed the fall colors but paid attention instead to my needs, my schedule, and basically, my life. My life at that time had absolutely no room for or any need to be mindful of "God's trees."

On a similar outing on a spring day she began to admire the big white fluffy clouds in the sky. She commented on how beautiful they were and that they "looked like you could sit on top of them and let your feet hang off." I can still hear those words, but the daily commute to punch the



time clock has created tunnel vision that blocks out God's wonders. Where has the appreciation of God's beauty gone? Again, I ask because I don't know. Perhaps the drive to be there and get it done has blinded us so much that we don't allow ourselves the moments to remember just how small we are in God's beautiful universe.

My yesterdays are filled with God, His blessings, and a good map with clear directions to His door. My today is filled with anguish over the fact that I didn't lose the map, but intentionally put it away in favor of going my own way. My own way, which has left me lost and without purpose. My tomorrow, I pray, will be filled with hope and reassurance from God that I may take up His map and make my journey through life on the right path. Thanks to my grandmother, I know how to read a map.

Growing up, I can remember my grandmother making us turn away from the television when a beer commercial came on. In recent days, watching anything on television with my grandmother has just gotten to the point that I become embarrassed and fearful of what she might see simply because you just never know what's coming. Today's world needs grandmothers. Someone to speak openly about God and someone to remind us continually of His plan for us and to remind us of His blessings.

So now I ask, "Where have all the grandmothers gone?" I'm just not sure. I do know that my grandmother has started her journey home. Just a few more hours and her work here will be done. Soon, there will be one less grandmother and one less teacher. Thank God for grandmothers who are sent from above. I hope God has a beautiful cloud waiting my grandmother's arrival. One that she can sit on and let her feet hang off. While she's there I hope she will look down at me, through God's trees, and see me reading my map, the map that will lead me to God's door, and hopefully, to a place on the cloud beside her, forever.

—Airport Church of Christ bulletin
Valdosta, Georgia

*Questions*

1. Do you feel there are misconceptions regarding the role of leadership? Explain.
2. In what ways may an introverted individual lead others?
3. What does 1 Peter 3:1–2 say about a quiet woman?
4. In what ways may a woman lead when she finds herself without an active or supportive spouse?
5. List biblical female leaders who either were not married or did not have a supportive spouse?
6. Describe how young women, as well as those in the middle and aging years, may lead.
7. Describe how the Israelites used outward attributes as criteria in selecting a new leader.
8. What did God tell Samuel with regard to beauty and leadership ability? (See 1 Samuel 16:7.)
9. What additional misconceptions concerning women's leadership come to your mind?

*Outline of
“What Leadership Is Not”*

Introduction: As I remember the little country church in which I worshiped, images of leadership abound. But what about today? Do we allow the world to shape our ideas of leadership? Some women who were questioned about leadership expressed what defines leadership. They were also vocal about what leadership is not.

- I. The first misconception is that a good leader must be an extrovert or have an outgoing personality.



- II. Misconception number two is that a good leader must have an active, supportive spouse.
- III. The third misconception is that leadership positions are best suited for those of a particular age.
- IV. The last misconception is that external attributes like beauty and grace make a good leader.

Conclusion: I was drawn back to the childhood memories of the men and women from my past who led according to their abilities. Their examples reveal that quiet individuals make great leaders if they have a willing heart. We also recognize that with or without a spouse, young or old, and with or without personal responsibilities women have the ability to lead others. Finally, we are taught through scripture that more importance should be placed on the leader's heart rather than her appearance. God is looking for individuals with pure hearts who are willing to lead.





Chapter Two

OIL AND WATER?

When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord! Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I, even I, will sing to the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

—Song of Deborah, Judges 5:2–3

I find it quite remarkable that one of the great judges of the Old Testament was a woman—one who lived during a time when men ruled. The positions of authority and power were all held by men. But sandwiched between Shamgar and Gideon is a female judge. A woman! Her name was Deborah. The people came to her for judgment as she sat under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel. She sent for Barak, of the tribe of Naphtali, and instructed him that the Lord had commanded him to deploy troops against a cruel king of Canaan called Jabin. Barak fearfully responded, “If you will go with me, then I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go!” (Judges 4:8.) It appears Deborah truly wanted the men to lead, but they were not willing. She told Barak she would go, but to his shame, God would “sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” And He did.

As I studied this story of a woman who did not want to be in control but felt pressed into this position of leadership, I began to wonder about women today. Is it possible to