

FASHIONED

CREATED FOR PURPOSE | AG WOMEN 2023



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welcome to Ministering to Women 2023

Women serve a vital role in all aspects of family life, church life, communities, and the marketplace. That is why it is our joy to come alongside and equip, encourage, and empower you for the journey ahead.

We are so excited to unpack our vision and theme for 2023—*Fashioned: Created for Purpose*. Ephesians 2:10 is our anchor verse that points to God's intentional design and purpose for your life.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.

We have also created an inductive Bible study for the Book of Esther that takes a not-so-traditional approach and brings some surprising application points for your own life. Whether you use this for your church Bible study, your workplace small group, or your individual study, we believe that God will reveal fresh insight as we are encouraged from the life and lessons of Esther.

Included in this resource magazine, you will also find stories from everyday women who have embraced their unique talents amid difficult life experiences. Through their stories and distinct journeys, God has given them a voice so that they are salt and light in many incredible ways.

We pray that these resources will help to deepen your relationship with Jesus, connect you to a community of women where you authentically engage and grow, and help you to share your faith wherever you go.

There's only one beautiful, amazing, awesome you. We believe in you, celebrate you, and are praying for you to thrive in every area of your life.

Perhaps you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this!

Blessings and love,

Nonda

Nonda Houston
AG Women
National Director



We believe
in you,
celebrate you,
and are praying
for you to thrive
in every area
of your life.



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Riding Her Own Race

By Amy Smith

“You present yourself differently when you know who you are in Christ,” says Cayla Kaolelopono, who at the age of twenty-two, holds twenty-six world records in motorcycle racing.

Cayla set most of her records on bikes sponsored and owned by her father, Chris Rivas, owner of Chris Rivas V-Twin in Fresno, California. Her other records were on bikes sponsored by Royal Enfield, a company based out of India.

Cayla says that she remembers her father racing motorcycles her entire life. “In fact,” she says, “my mom went to the racetrack when she was pregnant with me. I always knew it was what I wanted to do someday.”

Cayla is unique in many ways. In 2012, at twelve years old, she entered her first race at Bonneville Salt Flats and set a record that same year. “As far as I know, I’m the youngest person to set a land speed record on a motorcycle,” says Cayla. “It was just an amazing experience, and I fell in love with it right there.”

Owning his own business helped Cayla’s dad in adjusting her bike to make it faster each year. Still, Cayla remembers that the first thing she would ask was how he could make it even faster. It will now reach a speed of 153 mph.

The land speed racing classes in which Cayla competes are not based on age or gender, but they are determined solely by the motorcycle she rides. Many of the records she holds were formerly held by older men and women with more racing experience.

In addition to growing up around motorcycles, Cayla grew up in a family who loves Jesus. Her parents were youth pastors at Life Cathedral Church of God in Fresno, California, until she was seven



years old. “At the age of three, I decided on my own that I wanted to accept Jesus into my heart. So, I really grew up knowing Christ.”

Cayla’s grandmother lived with her family, and Cayla says that she was always a role model and godly woman. “She poured into me and showed me the love of Christ, God’s grace, and who God really is. Growing up around somebody like that was really an example to me, and she modeled how to be a Christian woman in my life.” Both her grandmother and mother have had significant roles in Cayla following God’s plan which has fashioned her for such a unique purpose in life.

By her senior year of high school, Cayla knew that instead of going to college, she wanted to get married and be a mom. Shortly after she graduated, she met her husband, Keoki, and they now have a nineteen-month-old son, Kekoa.

“It was interesting trying to nurse him in between runs and just diving into motherhood,” says Cayla. “Motherhood looks different while I’m racing and on the road.”

Cayla uses the unique way God fashioned her for racing as a platform to share the love of Jesus wherever she goes.

“My parents always told me that people are watching you, and you have to be an example of who Christ is. So, I just want to be that example to people in the racing world. And when you do

that long enough, people will ask you, ‘Why are you different?’ It opens the door for you to share who Christ is, what He’s done for you, and why you are different.”

Cayla says she and her dad always give God the glory for their wins and are very open about their Christian faith. “We have Scripture written on all our race bikes, so that’s a conversation starter,” says Cayla. “Other racers and others will see that on our bikes, and many will ask what it says, or some ask me to quote the Scripture.”

The current Scripture on Cayla’s bike is Zechariah 2:5 (NKJV) “ ‘For I,’ says the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ”

Cayla says, “People will observe you from a distance and see what you are really about. They want to know if it is real, is it true, or is it just a façade. And so, once they see you live that out, you really build that trust, and they see your true character.”

Cayla says the most crucial step in finding your purpose in life is, “to find who you are in Christ first, and ask Him, ‘How do You see me? Who do You say I am?’ ” She goes on to encourage women, saying, “Once you discover who you are in Christ, anything is possible. He can use your hobbies and your interests because you know who you are. So you can walk in that confidence. Once you know who you are, anything can be a testimony and open doors to sharing the gospel with people. You can do it through whatever you’re doing. It doesn’t have to be motorcycles.”



Cayla and Keoki Kaolelopono
with son Kekoa



Created for Discipleship

Does the Christian life ever feel like you're running on a hamster wheel? Day after day, you are spinning on your wheel, working hard, but unsure if you are making progress or if what you are doing truly has much meaning and purpose. If so, I have great news for you: You are not alone! I have found myself in the very same spot.

It is easy to fall into the trap of measuring our life based on performance and behavior. There are seasons when we aren't sure if we are being productive, and we lack a sense of purpose or direction. The good news is that God's Word has the answer to what brings us purpose. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus called to several fishermen, minding their own

business, and made a statement that changed their lives. He said, "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people!" (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). Luke 5 recounts the same event.

These fishermen became disciples—and so can anyone who responds to Jesus' invitation to follow Him. By becoming a part of God's family, you have become a disciple. And just what does that mean? A disciple is simply a learner or follower. Following Jesus is lifetime commitment. Oh yes, my dear sister, you are not just a believer or a child of God; you are now a disciple, and with that comes lifelong purpose and direction!

Taking a closer look at the verse above, we see its first words: "Come, follow me." That's our first assignment: to faithfully follow Jesus, to learn to be with Him. This gives our life meaning and purpose. Before we can carry out our assignment of

making disciples and teaching them about God and His love, we must spend time learning to be with Jesus. One of the most important things we learn while being with Jesus is who we are in Him. There, we find our identity and our purpose. Once we follow Jesus and learn to be more like Him in our love and obedience toward the Heavenly Father, we acquire His heart for those that are walking far from His will.

The next thing we read in that verse is that Jesus will “show us how to fish for people.” That is, He will make us disciple-makers. The Holy Spirit provides the transformation in our life to become what we could never be on our own: a new creation. He gives us a fresh start and transforms our desires and will so that we can become “fishers for people,” seeking and teaching people to be faithful disciples and disciple-makers themselves.

Something that keeps us from becoming disciple-makers is our focus on performance-based love instead of identity. Let me explain. A problem begins when we treat God and our membership in His family as a transactional relationship. The line of thinking is, *I must behave and perform a certain way for God to love me.* Let me tell you, God loves you because you are His child. If you have children of your own, they are not more loved because their hair is blond or brown,

or because they play the flute or the bass guitar. They are loved by you because they are yours, whether by birth, adoption, or other family ties. They are part of you, carrying your DNA and physical resemblance, personal interests, or family relationships. You bear the image of God. According to the Book of Genesis, all people are made in the image of our Heavenly Father. You are His child, and He loves you for who you are, not for what you do.

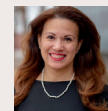
When you have embraced your newfound identity in Christ, you are ready to fulfill your purpose of making disciples. According to Matthew 28:18–20, making disciples is a lifetime commitment. We are to make disciples as we go about our daily life. It is not a one-and-done proposition. We need to purposely seek opportunities to develop genuine friendships that provide us avenues to share our faith.

When a person shares their faith journey with someone and that person comes to faith in Jesus, a disciple is born! There is no greater joy than to add one more to God’s family! Introducing someone to Jesus gives you the privilege of walking alongside them to model what it means to follow Him. It means teaching them how to read and study the Bible, what it means to pray (and how to pray), and how to walk in obedience to God each day. Discipleship, for the new

disciple and disciple-maker alike, is about transformation by the Holy Spirit and character formation into Christlikeness. It all starts by building relationships.

As you go about your day, ask the Lord to help you identify one or two people who could use a word of encouragement and to hear about God’s love. You are God’s child, and Jesus came to give life; wherever you go, be a life-giving person.

Making disciples is every believer’s responsibility and is our primary purpose as followers of Christ. Remember, our identity comes from learning to be with Jesus, and the next step is to fulfill our purpose by inviting others to become His disciples. When we understand our identity in Christ and the gift of participating in fulfilling His purpose, our life will gain new meaning and perspective.



Elly C. Marroquin
National Director of Christian
Education & Discipleship

“She’s a Born Leader”

Designed for Our Commission

“She’s a born leader.” Such words may be meant to encourage, but they suggest a misunderstanding of what leadership really is. Leadership experts have researched the subject extensively. They have found that the long-held trait theory of leadership—the notion that certain character traits make a person a leader, and you are either born with those traits or not—is simply not adequate to explain leadership.¹ Today, many leaders take collaborative, servant-oriented, transformational, and authentic approaches to leadership.

These styles do not flow from inborn traits but are skills that one can learn. Their focus is on helping people be and do their best—fundamentally, on influencing others. And anyone can influence others. Every follower of Jesus is called to influence others toward Christ. I believe we all must learn to do it well, whatever our context. God has called some—perhaps you—to leadership in the Church.

Every calling from God is sacred, not because of where the calling leads, but because of the One who gave it. Wherever God places us, Jesus calls us to invite others on a journey with Him into a life where the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven. We know this call as the Great Commission. God designed each of us to fulfill the Great Commission. Knowing where you would fulfill your part of the Great Commission, God also distinctively fashioned you for this place and time.

He has knit together your personality, joys, and strengths.

Then, as He redeems your pain and emboldens you with the Holy Spirit, He sends you to be an agent of the redemptive, righteous, and just kingdom of God within the corporation, church, or community where He has placed you. We are responsible to learn how to effectively fulfill our call in our sphere of influence.

How can you increase your influence? Let's consider a few characteristics of leadership and how to develop them.

Four Characteristics of Leadership

1. Leadership benefits others.

Godly leadership is not about exercising power, but it is about taking action to promote the wholeness and fruitfulness of someone else, perhaps by acting when they cannot. Jesus lived as a servant leader by emptying himself of His prerogatives as God and humbling himself to die on a cross (Philippians 2:3–8). Jesus-style leadership is focused on the good of those we lead. Where are you serving someone to help them be whole in Christ or advocating for someone's abundant life? In those moments, you are leading. Prayerfully look for other ways you could influence the wholeness of others.

2. Leadership is founded in hope.

Leaders operate on the basic assumption that a better future is possible.

That is hope. In psychological terms, hope is the belief that there is a path around or through difficulty. The gospel is hope. God saw our sin and gave us the path to come out of sin and into redemption. Where do you see a way forward out of difficulties or needs? That is where you can bring the hope of the gospel to bear on the brokenness of the world. Whatever your context, bring hope by guiding others to a better future in Christ.

3. Leadership happens in a million little moments before it happens in big ones.

Jesus led in small ways, building trust before calling His disciples to take bigger steps. He led Peter in conversations over dinner and during long walks between towns. Those moments developed Peter's trust so that when he heard the Lord's call to walk on the water, he could follow.

Queen Esther led in moments that could have seemed like wasted time. She did not act immediately when she learned of the threat to her people. She called a fast, then hosted days of banquets before requesting the king's action. She saved the Jewish people from extinction not by rushing in, but by waiting, listening to God, and carefully building her influence.

In what settings or relationships could you take time to hear God and build trust with others? Then, you can invite them to take bold steps with Jesus

or make sweeping changes that impact many.

4. Leadership is lived out in as many ways as there are people.

Today's variety of leadership styles releases us to be ourself. Knowing ourself and the ways we authentically exercise influence helps us in honing our skills. Whatever our jobs and roles, we are fashioned for and called to authentic influence. Let's learn to live in it well.

1. P.G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications), 26–27.

Q: How can you discover your style and develop your skills?

I recommend starting with these resources: CliftonStrengths® helped me discover my natural tendencies. Take the assessment at gallup.com/cliftonstrengths, then carefully read the report to learn how to make the most of your inclinations.

As a next step, read *Strengths-Based Leadership* (Conchie and Rath) to apply these insights to leadership. *The Path*, by Laurie Beth Jones, helped me discern more detail about God's call. It includes exercises that guided me in writing a clear mission statement that I continue to use today.



Rev. Debbie Lamm Bray, PhD
Program Dean at
Northwest University,
Oregon Campus

introducing FASHIONED

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10



“Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.” St. Catherine of Siena

You have been fashioned by God! More valuable than a sculpture by Michelangelo or a painting by Monet, you are God’s exquisite, handcrafted, one-of-a-kind design. When we know and embrace this truth, it really does change everything!

You are not only made by God, but you are also made for God’s purposes. Here’s something to think about: God could have created you and deposited a dream inside your heart, or maybe, just maybe, He did it another way. Maybe God had something to accomplish first, and then He wrapped a dream specifically and uniquely into you.

This is the very heart and soul of *Fashioned*. When we are anchored securely in our purpose and destiny, comparison loses its grip, and the hounding voice of insecurity lessens. We may try many paths to find out who we are, but our true identity is unlocked only as we encounter the living God.

We are praying that as we study God’s Word and learn the truth of who we were created to be, an army of anointed and called women will emerge to live with intention and on mission in every area of life.

Nonda



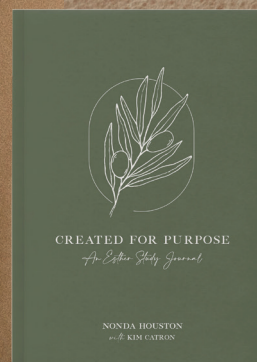
FASHIONED
CREATED FOR PURPOSE

FASHIONED

merchandise & apparel



12



→ *Created for Purpose:*

An Esther Study Journal

By Nonda Houston with Kim Catron

Created for Purpose is a four-week study on the book of Esther. While unpacking the life of Esther, readers will learn more about navigating adversity and disappointment while leaning into all that God has for them. 7 x 9 1/2", 144 pages, paper

| | | |
|---------|----------|---------|
| English | 02MV4260 | \$14.99 |
| Spanish | 02MV4261 | \$14.99 |



→ *Fashioned Bracelet*

The beaded bracelet is a beautiful piece of jewelry that features the *Fashioned* theme flower only on a silver charm. Because of its neutral colors, you can wear this piece with most anything.

17MV8359 \$8.99



→ *Fashioned T Shirt*

The T-shirt features the full logo on the back center, and "Fashioned, Created for Purpose" in standard placement on the top left of the front of the shirt. Crewneck cut. Unisex Fit.

| | | | |
|---------|-----|----------|---------|
| English | S | 08MV9607 | \$13.99 |
| English | M | 08MV9608 | \$13.99 |
| English | L | 08MV9609 | \$13.99 |
| English | XL | 08MV9610 | \$13.99 |
| English | 2XL | 08MV9611 | \$13.99 |
| English | 3XL | 08MV9612 | \$13.99 |
| Spanish | S | 08MV9613 | \$13.99 |
| Spanish | M | 08MV9614 | \$13.99 |
| Spanish | L | 08MV9615 | \$13.99 |
| Spanish | XL | 08MV9616 | \$13.99 |
| Spanish | 2XL | 08MV9617 | \$13.99 |
| Spanish | 3XL | 08MV9618 | \$13.99 |



→ *Fashioned Coffee Mug*

Enjoy a cup of coffee or tea from your *Fashioned* mug while doing your daily devotions. This mug is aesthetically pleasing with its matte brown base color and soft beige full logo. 14 oz.

| | | |
|---------|----------|---------|
| English | 17MV8352 | \$19.99 |
| Spanish | 17MV8353 | \$19.99 |



→ *Fashioned Water Bottle*

This sleek, white water bottle is a great for everyday use. It features the main theme for *Fashioned*. Non-slip bottom. BPA free. Hand wash recommended. 24 oz.

| | | |
|---------|----------|---------|
| English | 17MV8360 | \$24.99 |
| Spanish | 17MV8361 | \$24.99 |

→ *Created for Purpose Journal*

This stitch-bound, lined paper journal is great for your daily devotions. It has a strap to hold the journal together and a place for your pen or pencil. 7x 5".

| | | |
|---------|----------|--------|
| English | 17MV8350 | \$9.99 |
| Spanish | 17MV8351 | \$9.99 |



→ *Fashioned Zipper Pouch*

This canvas pouch features the full *Fashioned* logo with neutral zipper. It's the perfect size to throw in your bag when you're on the go! 7 1/4 x 5".

| | | |
|---------|----------|--------|
| English | 17MV8354 | \$4.49 |
| Spanish | 17MV8355 | \$4.49 |



→ *Gift Kit*

Want a mix of everything? Get the Gift Kit that includes the Pencil, Journal, Pouch, and Bracelet from *Fashioned*! Comes in a box.

| | | |
|---------|----------|---------|
| English | 08MV9605 | \$18.99 |
| Spanish | 08MV9606 | \$18.99 |

→ *Fashioned Pencils*

The *Fashioned* pencil is natural wood and a white eraser. It is simple, minimalist, and pairs nicely with the other *Fashioned*-themed items.

| | | |
|---------|----------|--------|
| English | 16MV7228 | \$0.99 |
| Spanish | 16MV7229 | \$0.99 |



Pastors' Wives

Pastors' Wives and Missionary Wives, We See You!

While every church and every missionary assignment is different, there are still common denominators that bind our hearts together in unique ways. Ministry life has its blessings, but also its challenges, and we need friendship to encourage and support one another through it all.

*So speak encouraging words to one another.
Build up hope so you'll all be together in this, no one left out,
no one left behind.*

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (MSG)

It's been a while since we have been together, and we are making plans to change that! Here are things to look forward to:

- Pastors' Wives/Missionary Wives Night Out @ General Council 2023
- Stay connected on our AG Ministry Wives Facebook Group
- Incredible and exciting future resources!

— Nonda

“I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews.” - Acts 26:2 (KJV)

Not only was Paul accused, but the Jewish leaders wanted him to be put to death. King Agrippa allowed him to speak, and Paul began with “I think myself happy.” Wow!

When we hear accusations against us, can we, in the midst of it all, stand and say, “I think myself happy”? I know I haven’t been able to do this. Let’s face it, accusations can hurt. The painful words of others can go deep into our inner being. Ministry wives know, all too well, the reality of pain caused by others, yet God has provided relief during that pain. By going to Jesus first and allowing Him to show me His strength, I can come away with a better perspective towards the accuser and the accusations. I come away able to say, “I think myself happy.”

My “mom-in-love” quotes this verse all the time. No matter what she walks through, I can hear her quote Paul’s words to King Agrippa. This speaks volumes to me. She knows who her strength comes from, and so did Paul.

Paul had no issues declaring and testifying about his Lord and Savior. Because of Paul’s attitude, he was able to speak to and proclaim the good news about Jesus to King Agrippa.

We can learn from Paul’s words and actions with King Agrippa. Like Paul, we can change our circumstances by how we respond. So today, I invite you to remember where your strength comes from. I invite you to enter into the sacred space with God where we can say, “I think myself happy.”



Rita DuBose
Pastors’ Wives Lead Team and
Assistant General
Superintendent’s Wife

Project Rescue

| LIGHT THE WAY 2023

Twenty-five years ago, while working in Southern Asia, David and Beth Grant had a colleague who led an outreach team into one of the largest red-light districts in the world. With over one hundred thousand inhabitants, this place was one of darkness and slavery.

This outreach dramatically altered the future of over one hundred women and led to the rescue of thirty-seven little girls from the dark, cruel world into which they were born. Without a plan or a place, but with a purpose to share the love of God, the Grants and their colleague were able to bring those little girls into the first Home of Hope. This was the birth of Project Rescue.

AG Women is thrilled to announce that Project Rescue is the Light the Way project for 2023. Today's women will continue to carry the torch, as well as the burden, for women and children caught in the debilitating evil of sex slavery.

Each year, over sixty-one thousand

women and children are impacted through the initiatives of Project Rescue. Thanks to generous partners who believe in the work of Project Rescue and the tireless efforts of team members on the ground, women and children are being restored mind, body, soul, and spirit. They are also finding their purpose and fulfillment in life.

Beth says that when she and David began this outreach twenty-five years ago, the first people to respond to the vision of Project Rescue were Women's Ministries groups and district Women's Ministries who made Project Rescue their missions project for the year.

"The response literally helped us launch the first several years of Project Rescue in Southern Asia," remembers Beth. "This mission resonated with

women in local churches, and they caught the vision of God's heart for exploited women and children before everybody else did. We are forever indebted to Women's Ministries and Assemblies of God women who have a heart for missions and a heart for women and children. They believed in the vision before they could ever see it."

The network of sex slavery and trading is a very dark system, not just in Asia, but globally. Beth says, "It's a system of evil. So, when I reach out to an individual child or woman, it's not just her reacting; I'm touching a system that's determined on using her, even though it will ultimately destroy her."

She says that as the teams have learned what that evil looks like, God has given them favor. Today, Project



Dr. Beth and Dr. David Grant
Cofounders of Project Rescue



Rescue is present in twenty-eight cities located in eleven countries in Europe, Southern Asia, Africa, and the Asia Pacific region.

Because Project Rescue believes that Jesus came to set all the captives free, they extend the love of Jesus to everyone in these red-light districts.

Often, the most powerful workers are those who were former madams and pimps. When they are loved and exposed to the presence of Jesus, they will often want to come out of bondage and seek their own freedom.

“We feel the heart of Jesus is to reach every man, woman, boy, and girl in the red-light districts. And Project Rescue, wherever possible, is there for the long haul,” says Beth.

Walking the neighborhoods week

after week, workers from Project Rescue make their presence felt and earn the trust of those in the community. David has often said that presence is everything.

“I would say that over the years, the one thing that most of the sites have in common is that they started with prayer walking,” says Beth. “God would lead a few women who have a heart for this work, and they would start having prayer together and then start prayer walking through the red-light district, sometimes for a year or two. But over time, the women in the district would learn to trust them. These women have been betrayed by everyone, often by those who should have been their protector. So, earning their trust takes time. But when a

woman of God cares enough to show up every week and interact with the women, eventually they realize they can trust her.”

Taking their cue from the captive women as to what initiatives are most needed in a particular area, Project Rescue positions its educational and medical facilities just outside the red-light districts so once trust is earned, the women can learn new skills and receive any help they need. Child-care centers are open all night so the children are not forced to stay in the

brothels with their mothers.

Jennifer Barratt, David and Beth's daughter, is the incoming executive director of Project Rescue. She was twelve years old when her parents rescued the first little girls and she has literally grown up with them.

"I got to watch these girls come from hell into a beautiful place of love, family, and community. And then I watched them grow. As I grew up, they were able to grow up much like me. They were given education and opportunity. They came to know the Lord, and I was able to watch the Lord work in their lives. Although they started from a very different place than me, we grew alongside each other," relates Jennifer. "What I love so much about Project Rescue is that it's not a 'snatch and grab' or a one-time thing, but it's a commitment to walk with children and women on their journey for as long as they need us."

Jennifer and her mother are excited about the future and the hope it holds for captive women and children all over

the world.

"I feel like we have a unique perspective of how this may take a long time, and it's a long journey, but it's a complete, full-circle thing," says Jennifer. "It's not like, 'Oh, we'll get them out, and hopefully they'll have a good life.' If we really commit to it, we know that God is committed to them, and they can have a new life with full healing and full restoration. I think it's such a beautiful thing to be a part of."

The future of this impactful organization rests squarely on the shoulders of donors and prayer.

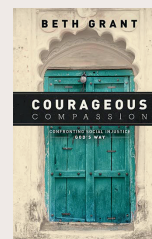
"Women in sexual bondage, more than likely, are not able or do not feel worthy to walk into a church," says Beth. "They feel shame. So most of the time, people in sexual slavery aren't going to come to us. We have to go where they are. Everything comes out of prayer. Open doors and open hearts come out of prayer."



Jennifer Barratt
Executive Director of Project Rescue
Pictured with husband, **Jonathan Barratt**,
CFO Project Rescue Foundation

AG Women invites you to come along beside us as we raise funds throughout 2023 for Project Rescue. Please visit our website, women.ag.org, to view the project promo video, and find out how you can be a part of what God is doing through Light the Way.

By Amy Smith



Courageous Compassion

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Meet the Light the Way Leaders

Light the Way has four incredibly anointed speakers who travel to preach and teach at events while representing *Light the Way*. Contact our office for details about having one of our speakers come to your next event.

Christina Vincent (English)

- Former youth pastor, national facilitator for the Network of Women Ministers Under 40, currently serves on preaching team at Desert Springs Church, Gilbert, AZ.
- Credentialed minister with the Assemblies of God



Evelyn Klingler (Spanish and English)

- Prayer and discipleship pastor at Life360 in Springfield, MO; coach at Life360 Community Services, former missionary to Peru and Honduras, church planter in Reading, PA
- Credentialed minister with the Assemblies of God



Kelli Ferguson (English)

- Copastors Calvary AG in Frederick, MD, with her husband, Benny Ferguson
- Credentialed minister with the Assemblies of God



Becky Marines (Spanish and English)

- Corporate chaplain at Tyson Foods
- Credentialed minister with the Assemblies of God



Created for Purpose

An Esther Study Journal



CREATED FOR PURPOSE
An Esther Study Journal

NONDA HOUSTON
with KIM CATRON

Interview with the Author *Nonda Houston*

Q: Nonda, talk to us about where this study came from.

Like so many, I have been through a season of great change. It was during the intensity of that change that God took me back to the Book of Esther. I realized that God was speaking something specific to women in our day through Esther's unique journey. The enemy always has a plan to sideline women, yet God desires to call us out of the crowd. Women are solution people. We use the wisdom and clarity that God has gifted us with to bring answers in the midst of chaos. I trust that as we journey through this study together, this truth will resonate in the lives of women everywhere, and we will embrace the reality that we, like Esther, were created for a purpose.

Q: Esther's life seemed to be marked by great loss. She lost her parents, she experienced what would today be called sex-

trafficking, and then she was asked to risk her own life to save her people. Talk to us about the difficulty in experiencing hardship and loss as a Christian.

Many times, we don't know what to do during hardship and trials. Humanity has always struggled with suffering—and rightly so. We want to have resolution and make sense of the pain we experience. For the believer, as much as we want the favor of God on our life, the times of pressing, breaking, and testing serve a purpose. That purpose is to refine us and prepare us for what is ahead.

Q: Mordecai played an important role in Esther's life and the path God intended for her to walk. Can you talk to us about the importance of the posture of our heart as we interact with those God has placed in our life to be a voice of reason?

Esther gave us a great example of living a life not only submitted to God, but also submitted one to another. In the midst of a chaotic time, God provided someone who would not only guide Esther, but also ground her. Mordecai lived this journey with Esther. He prayed, fasted, and interceded on her behalf. Esther benefitted from being submitted to him because he was submitted to God. Similarly, we can benefit from being submitted one to another. What does this mean? Find your people! Find your tribe who will pray, fast, and intercede with you. Practice this kind of community and see the fruit that it bears.

Q: Esther was so young and had been through so much trauma, yet she was able to make extremely important decisions on behalf of an entire people group. How is this done in our lives today?

There's no doubt that the hardship Esther endured created ongoing emotional trauma. While emotional trauma is not uncommon, at some point, we do need to embrace a few things. First, when dealing with emotional trauma, we must realize that God's desire is to heal us. He wants to restore what has been lost. He wants to mend the brokenness we've experienced. This is not a rush to move on, but an invitation to come out of the darkness and into the marvelous light of the living God. The reality is, friend, that emotions don't make good leaders. We decide if our emotions are going to lead us or if we are going to take charge of our emotions. While emotions are meant to inform us, they are never meant to lead us—ever. The story of Esther reminds us that God has provided a way for us to keep our emotions in their place, so that we can be the women God created us to be. Lean into that!

Q: In the book, you talk about how Esther faced “unanswered questions, unthinkable trauma, and an uncertain future.” Many may find themselves in the same place. What does it look like for Christians to face this uncertainty and remain hopeful that God will come through?

Mordecai told Esther that God would deliver the Jews one way or another. Many of us today find ourselves occupying the same place of uncertainty, but let's be clear about what we are saying is uncertain. We may be uncertain as to how God will deliver, but we never have to be uncertain about if God will deliver. Hebrews 11, the faith chapter, talks about overcoming difficult situations, but it also talks about those who receive their promises on the other side. Let's remember that we have the Living Hope, and that's a game changer. The hope we have in Jesus makes all the difference. Remember, faith fueled by hope trusts that God is at work regardless of what we can see. God will always come through.

Q: What would you say to the woman who is the middle of a difficult and uncertain time?

It's easy to feel like our testimonies begin after everything is said and done, and yes, those testimonies are important. However, it's really another thing entirely when you see someone living in the throes of their “for just such a time as this” moment. Those people have no idea where everything is going to land. They are trusting and obeying at every bend in the road. I would encourage women to not only talk about what God has done, but also to talk about what He is doing and what He will do. God is at work creating “for just such a time as this” moments in the lives of women across our nation and the world.

Created for Purpose

An Esther Study Journal



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An Esther Study Journal

NONDA HOUSTON
with KIM CATRON

Created for Purpose is perfect for your next individual or group Bible study.

Be sure to check out the teaching videos by Nonda Houston at women.ag.org, and on our social media beginning January 2023!

Through this study of Esther, you will learn how to:



Activate your trust

Embrace your assignment

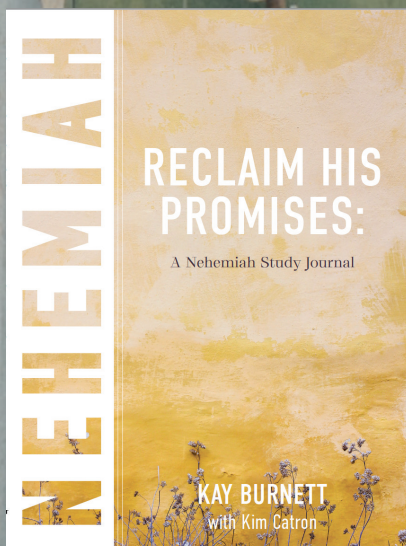
Find your voice

Walk in victory



Nonda Houston is an ordained minister with the Assemblies of God and the newly appointed national Women's director. She has been married to her husband, Gordon, for thirty-nine years. They served as lead pastors in San Jacinto, CA, for twenty-two years and at the SoCal Network Office as Women's director for nearly fourteen years. She loves family time with her four married children and being "Nonnie" to her eight grandchildren. Nonda is passionate about encouraging, inspiring, and equipping women to know Jesus and make Him known.

additional Resources

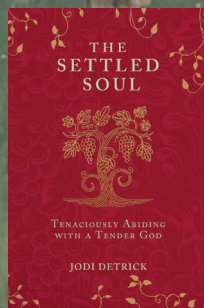


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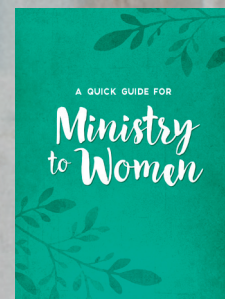
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→ *A Quick Guide for Ministry to Women*



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Re-Storied

with Purpose

“My senior year in college, I attended a conference, and the speaker quoted James 5:16, ‘Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.’ I didn’t hear anything else the rest of the meeting,” says Linda Seiler. “That night, I knew I had to take what was in the dark and bring it to the light with a trusted leader, or I would never be free.”

Linda is now executive director of ReStory, a ministry that seeks to bring truth to the LGBTQ community and an understanding of how to better share that truth to the church.

Linda grew up feeling like a boy trapped in a girl’s body, and she experienced sexual attractions to other girls. These feelings were unwanted, and she tried to suppress and fight them on her own for years.

Hearing the gospel for the first time when she was a senior in high school, Linda says, “I was riddled with guilt and knew I needed the Lord. I had a genuine encounter with Him.” Thinking she would awaken the next morning with all her gender issues solved, Linda was confused when that did not happen.

Feeling a call from God on her life, she joined a campus ministry in college, but continued to wrestle with her sexuality until the Holy Spirit prompted her to share her struggle with her campus pastor.

Thinking he would expose her secret to the group and kick her out of the ministry, Linda was shocked when her pastor received her with compassion and embraced her for her honesty.

That was the first day of Linda’s eleven-year journey to freedom. The body of Christ helped her through discipleship, redemptive relationships, and affirmation of her womanhood by other women. What truly set

Linda free was inner healing prayers that mended deep soul wounds and helped her to forgive the people who had inflicted those injuries.

Today, she says she never realized such freedom was possible and is living the dream as she grasps how God fashioned her for His glory. Enjoying her femininity, attracted to the opposite sex, and at peace with her God-given gender, Linda says her past moves further behind her each day. “I was on a trajectory of destruction, and God gave me a new story. That’s the mission of ReStory,” declares Linda, “equipping the church to become a healing community.”

From research and personal experience, Linda has found that Christians tend to create a separate category of sinners for those wrestling with their sexuality and gender issues. ReStory shares the insight that this confusion of identity most often stems from missing crucial attachments and relationships while growing up.

Because our sexuality is more complicated than a simple gene, we must see it from a holistic mindset. We are spirit, soul, and body. What goes on in our soul can and will affect our physical body. Deep soul wounds and wrong mindsets affect the choices we make and what we respond to sexually. Rejection and confusion

influence these responses. Many people have experienced this in other areas of life and look to food or alcohol for comfort. They turn to addictive behaviors because there is pain in their heart and in their soul. People do not want to feel that pain, so they try to numb it or fill the void with something else. ReStory endeavors to inform people, especially the church, that pain from gender confusion and rejection is no different.

In addition, Linda says that studies reveal a child needs about a decade of bonding with friends of the same sex to feel secure in their gender.¹ Boys are often rejected by their peers if they gravitate toward and excel in activities that our society views as feminine. The same is true for girls seen as tomboys. If this natural bonding with peers of the same sex does not occur, discomfort with and confusion about one’s gender and sexuality may occur. Abandonment or childhood sexual abuse by parents or caregivers may also cause deep wounds for those who struggle with their sexuality, leading to confusion about one’s sexuality.

“Once we realize people in the LGBTQ community are usually suffering from great pain and feelings of rejection, we can feel compassion for those from whom we would

normally want to distance ourselves,” says Linda. How can the Lord use me to reach out to people in the LGBTQ community and love them in the middle of their pain, the way He loved me in the middle of my mess and pain? is what Linda says Christians need to ask themselves.

There is no evidence of chemical or hormonal justification for LGBTQ tendencies, so ReStory brings hope to people struggling with their gender identity by providing insight to their feelings. “When they find there is a reason,” Linda says, “it gives them hope and expectation for a resolution.” By prayerfully examining their childhood difficulties and problems, the core issues often become apparent.

Linda insists that regardless of the sinner, presenting the salvation message is the same. The sin, in and of itself, is not the sinner’s biggest problem—it is their lack of relationship with Jesus Christ. She encourages Christians to befriend their gay and lesbian neighbors and coworkers just as they would anyone else. Sharing the gospel comes from developing a relationship with the person. Christians often feel a responsibility to change their gay loved ones, but change comes when an individual develops his or her own personal

relationship with the Lord.

When disagreeing with someone about choices they make, Linda stresses that it is imperative not to let the debate become personal. Because our society no longer accepts God’s Word as absolute truth, everyone sees their personal opinions as having equal weight as those of everyone else. This being the case, there is no place for the disagreement to go except toward the person who holds the idea or view in question. If the conversation becomes personal, Christians could be labeled as haters.

When we remove personal attacks from the conversation, it becomes much easier to reveal the root of the issue: a lack of knowing and receiving God’s love and forgiveness. When a person receives God’s forgiveness, and starts delving into the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will convict him or her of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

The main message of ReStory is compassion without compromise. “We really need to have compassion for people, but we cannot compromise the Word of God,” says Linda. “Sometimes, we are all about one or the other. We love people, but we’re afraid to speak the truth. Or we beat them over the head with the Bible, and we don’t love them. Balance

is the key, and we must remember where we came from.”

ReStory provides training and consultations for churches and leaders. Their website offers a variety of information for those who struggle with gender issues, those who want help in supporting family members, and for pastors who desire to equip their church to be a healing community.



Rev. Linda A. Seiler, PhD
Executive Director,
ReStory Ministries

1. Daryl J. Bem, “Is There a Causal Link Between Childhood Gender Nonconformity and Adult Homosexuality?,” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health* 12, no. 1/2, 61–79, https://doi.org/10.1300/J529v12n01_05 accessed 9/15/2022. Also Laura D. Hanish and Richard A. Fabes, “Peer socialization of gender in young boys and girls” *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*, August 2014, <https://www.child-encyclopedia.com/gender-early-socialization/according-experts/peer-socialization-gender-young-boys-and-girls> accessed 9/15/2022.



From Detour

to Destiny...

By Amy Smith

Evangelist Julie Seals was born with a segment of her spinal cord protruding through a hole in her back. Not expecting that she would live, her parents took her home to die. Citing Psalm 139, “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb . . . all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be,” Julie says, “God had other plans.”

Early in life, Julie was numbing her pain from spina bifida by mixing alcohol with her prescription narcotics. By age nineteen, she turned to meth and entered a party lifestyle. “That one little bag of meth put me on a road leading straight into hell,” she says. “I was heavily, heavily addicted to alcohol and methamphetamine for seventeen years.”

Eventually, the spina bifida and neuropathy resulted in lesions on her left foot. “It looked like a shark

had bitten a chunk out of my foot,” remembers Julie. At age twenty-eight, after twelve surgeries and almost losing her life, gangrene set in, and her left leg was amputated below the knee.

“Along the way, I got married and had a son, Tyler. But my marriage, like my life, was a mess, and I didn’t want my son to grow up seeing that,” says Julie. “I took Tyler and decided I was going to run away from life. I moved from California to Tennessee, as far away as I could get.”

Sensing that she needed God, she attended church for a month, but without discipleship or friendships, it wasn’t long until Julie gravitated back to the old lifestyle she was accustomed to. “It’s like being sucked into this funnel of evil. You want out so badly, but you don’t even know what the first step is,” Julie recalls.

When her son was four years old, Julie found herself in a very ugly

custody battle with his father. Not knowing what to do, she fled to Mexico with her son to get away from the authorities. Ten days later, realizing what a mistake she had made, she returned to the States only to find customs officers and police waiting for her at the border.

Separated from Tyler, she was handcuffed and placed in a police car. Authorities escorted her son to a different vehicle. The moment she had dreaded was upon her; separated from her son, she would not see him again for sixteen years.

Released after three weeks in jail, Julie was determined to get her life straightened out so she returned home to her parents. Shortly after, her father scheduled what he thought would be a minor hernia repair. However, the procedure revealed lung cancer, and he never left the hospital, dying just a few weeks later.

Julie was devastated by the unexpected loss. “I had lost my leg, my son, and now my dad. I just gave up on life, moved back to Mexico, and spent the next two years slowly committing suicide, getting deeper and deeper into the drinking, drugs, meth, and even the drug cartel scene in Mexico.”

Her breaking point came when infection from a wound resulted in a Mexican doctor urging Julie to have her other leg amputated. Returning to her house on the beach in Ensenada, Mexico, Julie fell to her knees, and for the first time in her life, she cried out to God.

“It was a moment ordained by God because I had always thought of myself as a victim. I had excuses and reasons for everything. But in that moment, the Holy Spirit reached in and took away the blinders. I realized that I was not a victim, but I was a sinner and I needed a Savior.”

Julie prayed, “God, I need You to be the center of my life, or I’m going to be lost forever. I can’t meet You halfway because I can’t quit on my own, so God, do whatever it takes.”

The next morning, she awakened and, because she felt no different, she thought that God hadn’t heard her. She accepted an offer to deliver four pounds of crystal meth across the border at San Ysidro. As she hesitantly approached the border, she felt a force greater than

herself propelling her forward to the pedestrian crossing. The U.S. Border Patrol agent started questioning her. Although she knew that life in prison was the sentence for such crimes, Julie heard a complete confession coming from her mouth. As the agent led her away, she heard the voice of God say, “Two years.”

At her arraignment, the judge declared a seventeen-year-to-life sentence and sent her to federal prison.

Julie admits, “Most people would have looked at me and said, ‘She’s scum.’” But a woman from the prison ministry group who visited the prison looked at her and asked Julie if she knew that Jesus loved her. “I struggled with that,” says Julie, “and I answered that Jesus couldn’t love me because I had led such an evil life.”

It took convincing, but the woman finally got through to Julie that God did love her, and He would forgive her sins so she could belong to Him forever.

That evening, January 8, 2001, Julie knelt in her cell, confessed her sins, and made Jesus her Lord.

Six months after her arraignment, she appeared in court before the toughest judge in the district. He told her that he saw something different in her. He didn’t know what it was, but he was going to give her a chance. He sentenced her to thirty-six months in the federal prison. She only served twenty-two, two months short of the

two years God had spoken to her at the border.

Julie says, “I promised God that if He ever let me out of prison, I would never stop going back in.” And she has kept that promise. Today, she travels across the nation speaking in prisons, churches, women’s conferences—anywhere that will open its doors to her message of hope.

“My purpose and passion are to point a lost, dark, hopeless, hurting, broken, deceived world to Jesus Christ, who in Him alone is our hope and our answer to every hurt, to every pain, to every mistake, to every trial. He alone gives what we need, and He changes everything,” declares Julie.



Julie Seals
Evangelist, Speaker, Author



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14. *The Power of a Woman's Words*
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we're better together

AG Women is a community of women from across the nation and around the world who are following Jesus and making Him known. We are separated by miles but united in cause—mothers, daughter, sisters, and friends doing life together.

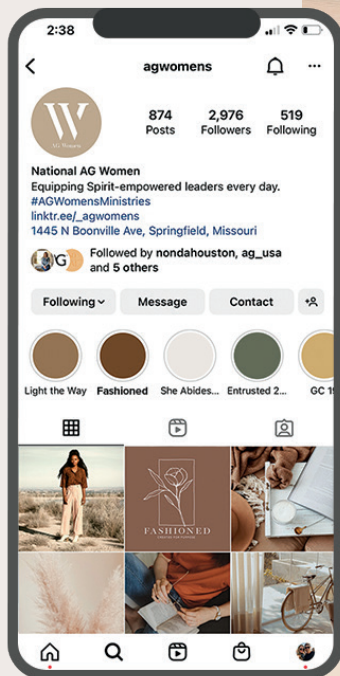
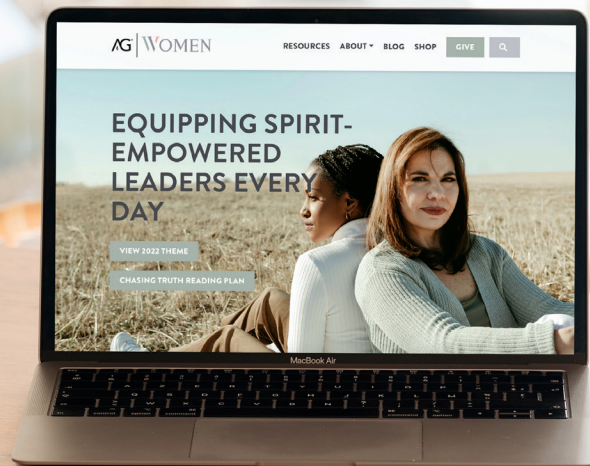
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- o Discipleship through resources
- o Leadership through training
- o Missions giving through Light the Way annual project
- o Celebrating women through National Women's Ministry Day- February 26, 2023
- o Compassion through partnership with ministries

Let's Connect

God is doing amazing things at AG Women!

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AG Women FB: facebook.com/AGWomen

Pastors' Wives FB Group: AG Ministry Wives

AG Women Instagram: @AGWomens

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Recommended Ministries

These ministries are affiliated with the Assemblies of God and recommended by AG Women.

ABORTION RECOVERY

SaveOne: Healing after Abortion
Directed by Sheila Harper
Visit saveone.org.

ABUSE AND/OR ADDICTION RECOVERY

Abundant Life Ministry Center
Directed by Sue Willis
Visit AbundantLifeMinistryCenter.org.

Adult and Teen Challenge U.S.A.
Directed by Gary Blackard
Visit teenchallengeusa.org.

Project Ignite Light
Directed by Pebbles Thompson
Visit www.ignitelight.org.

Pure Life Ministries
Directed by Steve and
Kathy Gallagher
Visit purelifeministries.org.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESCUE

F.R.E.E. International
Directed by Michael Bartel
Visit freeinternational.org.

Global Center for Women and
Justice
Directed by Sandra Morgan
Visit gcwj.org

Project Rescue
Directed by Jennifer Grant Barratt
Visit projectrescue.com.

Protect Me Project
Directed by Carla Marroquin
Visit protectmeproject.org.

ADOPTION/FOSTER CARE

COMPACT Family Services
Directed by Alan Bixler
Visit compactfamilyservices.org.

COMPASSION

Convoy of Hope: Convoy Women
Directed by Doree Donaldson
Visit convoyofhope.org/what-we-do/womens-empowerment.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS

God's Transforming Grace
Directed by Darla Colinet
Visit godstransforminggrace.com.

MARRIAGE

Marriage Encounter
Directed by David and Chris Morrison
Visit agme.org.

Teaming Life
Directed by Robert and Pamela
Crosby
Visit teaminglife.com.

PASTORIAL CARE/COUNSELING

Emerge Counseling Ministries
Directed by Dr. Robert Crosby
Visit emerge.org

SEXUAL IDENTITY

Linda Seiler
Visit lindaseiler.com.

ReStory Ministries
Restoryministries.org.

Joe Dallas
joedallas.com

SPECIAL NEEDS

CompassionLink Disability Ministry
Coordinated by Thomas and
Angelia Carpenter
Visit compassionlink.org.

WOMEN AND GIRLS

Ministry to Muslim Women: Say Hello
Directed by Lynda Hausfeld
Visit sayhelloinfo.com.

Ministry to Single Moms
Directed by Lois Breit
Visit loisbreit.com.

Ministry to Widows
Directed by Marlene Craft
Visit widowslink.org.

AG National Girls Ministries
Directed by Kim Sharp
Visit ngm.ag.org.

WOMEN MINISTERS

Network of Women Ministers
Directed by Crystal Martin
Visit womenministers.ag.org.

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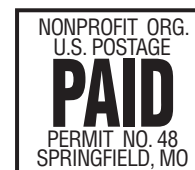


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| Arizona | Lindsay Petri | azagwomen.org | | |
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| Georgia | Kristi Steffens | courageoussisterhood.com | | |
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| | | | | Liz DeFrain |
| | | | | Lisa Potter |
| | | | | Rosita Arce |
| | | | | Linda Bottoms |
| | | | | Falavia "Via" Ava |
| | | | | Rosa Ramos |
| | | | | Rachel Schaible |
| | | | | Jill Barker |
| | | | | Linda Hicks |
| | | | | Miriam Saravia |
| | | | | LeAnn Sullivan |
| | | | | Elizabeth Dos Santos |
| | | | | Sherry Welch |
| | | | | Antonina "Nina" Arroyo |
| | | | | Elena Torres |
| | | | | Mirian Maria |
| | | | | Tammy Waycaster |
| | | | | Esther Garza |
| | | | | Lilia "Lily" Rodriguez |
| | | | | Christina Sattesahn |
| | | | | Silvia Terrazas |
| | | | | Jordan Bryson |
| | | | | sdag.org |
| | | | | swddistrict.com |
| | | | | spanisheasterndistrictag.org |
| | | | | tnabg.org |
| | | | | tghd.org |
| | | | | txlahispanic.org |
| | | | | westflorida.ag |
| | | | | westtexasag.org |
| | | | | www.wtapag.org |
| | | | | networkwomenlead.com |
| | | | | wyomingministrynetwork.com |





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Springfield, MO 65802-1894



When life is good, it's easy to maintain a happy disposition and a good attitude. But when life gets hard—and it does—how do you navigate adversity and disappointment without spiraling into fear and anxiety? How do you face the winds of trouble without being consumed by chaos and sinking into hopelessness? Join us as we dive into the Book of Esther together. God is sure to do something amazing!



General Council 2023

WE'LL SEE YOU THERE!

- AG WOMEN BREAKFAST 2023 | 8/2/23 | 7:00 AM
- PASTORS' WIVES NIGHT OUT | 8/3/23 | 8:00 PM



MINISTERING TO WOMEN IN 2023 | WOMEN.AG.ORG

19M 12/22