

Q & A

IVP Books

Women in God's Mission

Accepting the Invitation to Serve and Lead

Available November 6, 2018 | \$18, 240 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-4551-4

Mary T. Lederleitner is founder and executive director of Missional Intelligence. She has a PhD from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and an MA in intercultural studies from Wheaton College, and teaches as an adjunct professor at both institutions. She is a veteran mission leader and researcher who has served for two decades with the Wycliffe Global Alliance in a variety of international leadership roles. She serves on the OM Global Board and as a board member for Catalyst Services. She is also the author of *Cross-Cultural Partnerships*.

A Needed Resource for Missions in the Age of #MeToo

What made you want to write a book about women in missions?

As I traveled around the world I kept noticing that women in leadership roles were often facing some unique issues and challenges that were different than male mission leaders. I also noticed that most literature about leadership was written by men, and women had to find their place in it. I wanted to write a book that gave voice to women's experiences, insights, and wisdom about leadership in general and leadership in God's mission specifically. In the end I think what emerged will be of great interest to male leaders as well.

Why is this book so important right now?

In light of the #metoo movement and the women's marches in 2016 there seems to be growing interest in helping women to grow to their full potential. My book looks at women who are reaching their potential and what men need to understand to help women they care about realize their potential.

Why are women's voices important, even in a field perceived to be male dominated?

If we will take time to honestly talk to and carefully listen to faithful women who are serving and leading in God's mission, our personal discipleship journeys will deepen and we will be far more fruitful as we labor together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

What do you hope readers can take away from your book, whether they're male or female?

- I believe God is truly proud of his faithful daughters across the body of Christ. As they say yes to his invitations to serve and lead, he uses them in amazing ways to further his purposes in the world.
- Women are not second-class citizens in God's kingdom. As they follow God faithfully they are changing the world in amazing ways as they reach out to others with the love of Christ.
- Many women face additional challenges because of their gender when they answer God's call to step out and lead in his mission. However, God often seems to make a way for his daughters even when others might not understand his strategy of using women.
- While faithful women are striving to follow God, they face hurdles that cannot be overcome unless other men and women in their ministry contexts open doors and support them in their journey.
- We need new ways of seeing and understanding God's strategy of using women to further his mission in the world, for old, polarized attitudes about women in ministry are not aligning with how God is working in and through them.

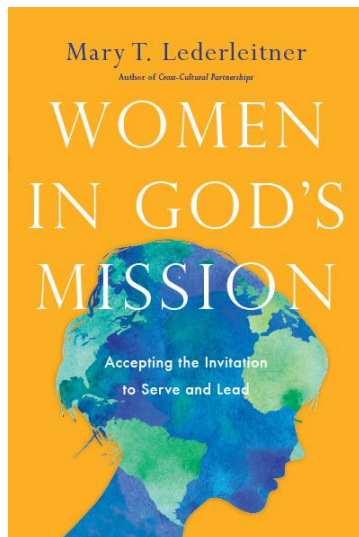


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EXCERPT

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"Mary's book highlights the fact that around the globe women face a wide variety of challenges as a result of their gender, yet many find contextually appropriate ways to serve that are helpful to God's mission purposes. . . . This book is a timely reminder of the incalculable value of women accepting God's invitation to serve his mission."

—Ed Stetzer, Billy Graham Distinguished Chair of Church, Mission, and Evangelism

Women, Ministry, and #MeToo

I have to confess I never thought I would write a book about women in leadership. Because of the controversies about what women can or cannot do in ministry, I have always tried to avoid the topic whenever possible. My professional strategy has been to keep my head down, work extremely hard, and draw as little attention to my gender as humanly possible. I empathized with a friend's comment when I asked if I could interview her for this book. Even though she is an extraordinary leader who is deeply respected by mission leaders in her nation, when it came to this theme she said, "I usually run the other direction as fast as my little legs will carry me."

For many months God has been wooing me to write this, but I do so with a great deal of trepidation. I want to help women who are serving and leading in God's mission and not make their lives more difficult. I write with the best of intentions, but there are always unintended consequences. I hope and pray the ripple effects from this book will help and not hurt them, for sometimes even raising the gender issue can cause a harmful backlash.

My desire is to share stories of faithful and trusted women, so other agendas or issues do not derail the conversation about women in God's mission. Other people can write books that argue for their points of view. The purpose for my book is to bring the voices of respected women from approximately thirty nations to the dialogue about leadership in general, and to the dialogue about service and leadership in God's mission specifically. I learned so much from their stories and insights. I hope you will enjoy the opportunity to learn from them as well.

* * *

Women have advanced God's mission throughout history and around the world. But women often face particular obstacles in ministry. What do we need to know about how women thrive?

Mission researcher Mary Lederleitner interviewed and surveyed ninety-five respected women in mission leadership from thirty countries to gather their insights, expertise, and best practices. She unveils how women serve in distinctive ways and identifies key traits of faithful connected leaders. When women face opposition based on their gender, they employ various strategies to carry on with resilience and hope. Real-life stories and case studies shed light on dynamics that inhibit women and also give testimony to God's grace and empowerment in the midst of challenges.

Women and men will find resources here for partnering together in effective ministry and mission. Organizations can help women flourish through advocacy, mentoring, and addressing structural issues. Wherever God has invited you to serve and lead, discover that you are not alone as you answer the call.



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