

ENDORSEMENTS



Buried Talents

Overcoming Gendered Socialization to Answer God's Call

April 26, 2022 | \$20, 160 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0250-6

If God calls women to lead, what holds them back? Using social science research and interviews, Susan Harris Howell examines how gendered messages inside and outside the church pull men toward leadership and women away from it. As opportunities for women continue to expand, Howell provides compelling guidance for how we can remove obstacles that keep women from fully using their gifts.

Understanding Gendered Messages and Leadership

"The cumulative effect of gendered socialization is profound. With clarity and precision, psychologist Dr. Susan Harris Howell diagnoses what gendered socialization is as well as the problems it has caused. Focused primarily on the United States, she examines layer upon layer of accumulated messages that men are superior to women. Often subtle, these ideas permeate educational practices, media portrayals, linguistic conventions, division-of-labor expectations, and more. Tragically, the outworking of such socialization often results in women's opting out of their God-given callings—burying their talents under sedimented layers of 'you can't' or 'you shouldn't.' By understanding these patterns and systems, we can unearth the talents that have been buried, and even more hopefully, empower the next generation to invest their talents with confidence."

—**Christa L. McKirland**, Logia International, lecturer in systematic theology at Carey Baptist College

"Some may think today that the battle for women's leadership is done. However, Dr. Howell shows us the many implicit ways women and men are socialized from childhood to adulthood to discourage women from following God's call into church leadership. She ends her sobering account with chapters on individually and communally restoring self-confidence and honest self-appraisal. *Buried Talents* is a stimulus for change that all should read. It ends on a note of hope."

—**Aída Besançon Spencer**, senior professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and coeditor and author of *Christian Egalitarian Leadership*

"In *Buried Talents*, psychologist Susan Harris Howell shines a light on the subtle but potent forces of socialization that tend to prevent women from serving in church leadership. This work of illumination is a gift to the church, offering a way out of the confines of gender essentialism and into a world where women and men can truly flourish."

—**Rob Dixon**, associate regional ministry director with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and author of *Together in Ministry: Women and Men in Flourishing Partnerships*

"I guarantee you will experience many *aha!* moments as you read *Buried Talents*. Susan Harris Howell identifies both inner obstacles as well as societal norms that contribute to women holding back our leadership gifts. This is a book I would love to have read as a young girl trying to discern if it was a mistake that I was entrusted with gifts of leadership and teaching."

—**Nancy Beach**, leadership coach and author of *Gifted to Lead: The Art of Leading as a Woman in the Church*

"Articulate, well-researched, encouraging, and challenging, *Buried Talents* uses Susan Harris Howell's decades of leadership and teaching experience to extrapolate not only the facts but the heart and struggle behind today's gender issues. Filled with resources, helpful suggestions, and engaging stories, this book is a must-read for anyone looking to identify, affirm, and develop the strengths of both women and men as we live and lead *together*."

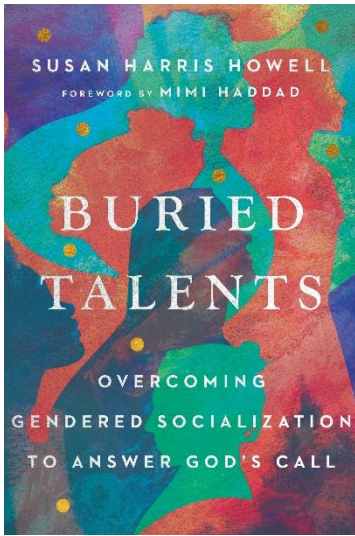
—**Kadi Cole**, leadership consultant, executive coach, and author of *Developing Female*



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“Too many leadership gifts of women are buried and blocked by both implicit and explicit gender bias. Gender bias is woven into the very fabric of our culture and affects girls and women at every stage of development. Susan Harris Howell methodically unravels the threads that constrain women from pursuing and thriving in leadership in the church and out. A must-read for every person advancing gender equity, especially in the church.”

—**Jeanne Porter King**, executive pastor, leadership coach, and author

“When girls or boys are socialized in gendered roles that limit what they can or cannot do, the loss can be immense to families, to communities, and to the church. Dr. Susan Harris Howell has given us a great gift: it is the wisdom of a psychologist in understanding the impact of myriad influences on our socialization throughout our lifetime. This is a book the church has long needed in light of a gender bias that limits the ways in which women or men are allowed to serve Jesus Christ.”

—**Alice Mathews**, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, retired, and author of *Gender Roles and the People of God*

“This challenging book will open your eyes, convict, and inspire. Susan’s research helped me trace the roots of my conditioning around gender roles. And it left me with a clear sense of actionable steps to better advocate for myself and to create a more equitable world for the women who will come after me. An outstanding contribution for women *and men* in ministry, and beyond.”

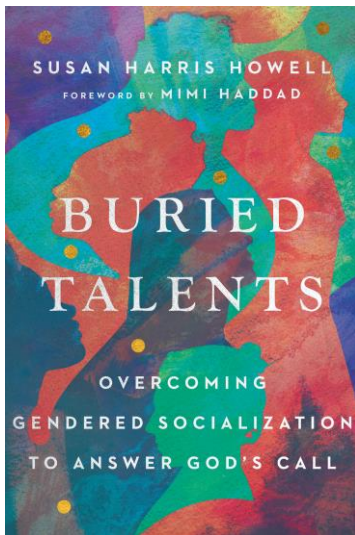
—**Samantha Beach Kiley**, creative arts pastor



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Q & A



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Susan Harris Howell (EdD, University of Louisville) is professor of psychology at Campbellsville University, where she teaches on gender studies and integrating faith and psychology. She frequently writes and speaks for Christians for Biblical Equality.

Removing Obstacles from Women's Vocational Pathways

What led to your interest in socialization and calling for women in leadership?

Susan Harris Howell: Relatively few women aspire to positions of church leadership, even within denominations which are open to women filling such positions. One day a student asked me, "If God calls women to pastor, why don't more churches have women leaders?" She didn't seem to understand that by the time women make occupational decisions, almost two decades of implicit socialization has channeled them away from seeing themselves as leadership material. The fact that no one had identified this as a major obstacle prompted me to take on that task myself.

What is your main thesis in *Buried Talents*?

Howell: I expose the subtle forms of socialization that pull women away from, and move men toward, leadership—both within the church and other male-dominated occupations. Rather than defending women's right to lead, I draw from social science research to expose the subtle messages girls and women receive that limit them to following God in "gender-appropriate" ways. I focus on socialization, which is so subtle it often goes unnoticed and therefore can be more dangerous than some of the blatant sexism we readily identify and reject.

Who did you have in mind as you were writing this book?

Howell:

- Students within psychology, sociology, and theology classes will find this book a valuable supplemental text to better understand the obstacles women face when called to lead.
- This book is also for the Christian woman who has been hesitant to answer God's call and who is now dissatisfied with her life of service. Even though she believes Scripture supports women in positions of leadership, she has been socialized to hold back and follow rather than to lead and has implicitly accepted those messages. Reading my book, she will become aware of the messages she was given and the mindset they created. She will learn to construct more accurate messages to encourage her to answer God's call.

What do you hope your book contributes to the study of gender and ministry?

Howell:

- This book will be a valuable supplemental text for students—male and female—preparing for ministry. They will learn that we do not receive our calling within a vacuum and factors outside our immediate awareness influence how we answer that call.
- Students will see the application of social learning and cognitive theory to something as sacred as the choice of our life's work.
- I provide empirically supported techniques to help readers move into healthier, more productive mindsets and behaviors.



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