



Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors

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The concept of the glass ceiling is not new. In the secular realm, the glass ceiling represents the barrier that prevents qualified individuals from excelling beyond a certain level due to their race, gender, or orientation. For those of us who serve in the sacred or religious realm, we know it as the stained glass ceiling, referring to the barriers imposed by churches. In *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors*, we celebrate the good news that God has opened the eyes of some congregants regarding the legitimacy and divine prerogative of God to call females to the holy vocation of pastoring. However, there is still much work to be done.

Through a survey of over 100 clergywomen and interviews with both male and female pastors, this book explores the issues that impede women's progress towards becoming senior pastors and offers strategies for congregations and denominational leaders to change current trends. *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling...* also offers words of wisdom, encouragement and instruction for female clergy who feel called to the pastorate.

For more information about *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors* or to order a copy of the book, visit the Judson Press website at http://www.judsonpress.com/product.cfm?product_id=16736.

Excerpt from, *Beyond the Stained Glass Ceiling: Equipping and Encouraging Female Pastors...*

Chapter 1

Whom Shall We Send?

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38, KJV)

As we explore the question, “Whom shall we send?” the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus, can provide great insight. Poor, young, unwed, and ordinary, Mary would not have been on the short list of most people to become the mother of the Messiah. Yet the Lord chose her. Readers of the text are left to speculate why the Lord chose Mary. We are given only the angel’s words that she was “highly favored” and that the Lord was with her (Luke 1:28). Later, Mary expresses her own beliefs and words of praise regarding why she was chosen (Luke 1:46-55, KJV):

*And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from
henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the
imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.*

Clearly, Mary believed that God regarded her “low estate” and did “great things” to her. Mary praised God for exalting her and using her as an anointed vessel. Mary was chosen by God and sent forward to carry the Word that became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Understandably, upon receiving the message that God had chosen her, Mary had a question: “How can this be?” The angel provided a supernatural response to a natural question: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35, KJV).

As women have heard and grappled with God’s call upon their lives, many, like Mary, have asked, “How can this be?” Women are not supposed to preach and pastor. How can this be? I don’t know any man who would license or ordain me. How can this be? I don’t know what steps to take next. How can this be? I don’t even know how to begin to explain what I am feeling. I don’t have a lot, my name is not prominent,

frequently I am overlooked, I'm not in the in-crowd, I'm not popular, people have even shunned me. Lord, how can this be?

At the appointed time, God sends angels to declare, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you." God has many Marys to send. Will we recognize them? God's sending process is different from ours. Often we look for the best, the brightest, the most beautiful, the most popular, and that which is highly esteemed among people. God, however, uses a different barometer. God discerns the heart. The questions are, Will our hearts be open to the heart of God as God seeks to use us in the sending process? Will we allow ourselves to be the angels to help to clarify the call, provide reassurance, tell them that they are "highly favored" and held by God, and then send them forth to carry the gospel? We must believe that we are the angels—the women and men who affirm that God calls and chooses whomever God wills. Whom shall we send? We should send those who express and exhibit a willingness to say, like Mary, "be it unto me according to thy word."

Those who are called have to be open to the path that God places before them. Those who are sent must be realistic about the challenges ahead. It is important for those who do the sending to assist in the preparation process for those who are going and for those who will be on the receiving end. It is critical for the senders to teach those who are being sent that ministry is not for the faint of heart, whether male or female...

End of Excerpt

About the Author

A native of Akron, Ohio, the Reverend Christine A. Smith accepted Jesus Christ as her personal savior at the age of fifteen. She answered the call to ministry and was licensed to preach in the Tabernacle Baptist Church of Akron, Ohio, at age seventeen. She holds a bachelor of science in education, specializing in learning disabilities and developmental handicaps (1987) from the University of Akron. She holds a master of divinity from the Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse School of Religion in Atlanta, Georgia, specializing in systematic theology and women's studies (1990). In 1993



Rev. Smith joined the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, under the pastorate of the Reverend Dr. Otis Moss Jr., and was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1995. She served Olivet as minister of Christian education for three years. Rev. Smith was featured in *The African American Pulpit* as one of the “Twenty to Watch” (winter 2001–2002, Judson Press).

In January 2006, Rev. Smith became pastor of the Covenant Baptist Church in Wickliffe, Ohio. She holds the distinction of becoming the first female pastor of Covenant, the first African American pastor of Covenant, and the second female Baptist pastor of a mainline denomination in the greater Cleveland area (American Baptist Churches USA). She currently serves as president of the board of trustees of the Cleveland Baptist Association. In 2009 Rev. Smith wrote and successfully secured a grant from the National Ministers Council (ABCUSA) to begin Women Together in Ministry (WTIM) of Greater Cleveland. WTIM is a network designed to connect, encourage, and support women in ministry. She also produces a weekly blog, Shepastor (<http://shepastor.blogspot.com>), a site dedicated to providing encouragement, guidance, words of wisdom, and instruction to female clergy. In March 2012 the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* featured her article “Being Persistent in Pursuit of Social Justice” in the *Messages of Faith* column.

Rev. Smith is proud wife of Aristide Smith Jr. and blessed mother of three wonderful children: two sons, Aristide III and Caleb, and a daughter, Aris Christine. Truly, God has been good to the Reverend Christine A. Smith. For the Lord's loving kindness and tender mercies, she simply says, “To God be the glory for the things he has done!”