



Encouragement for the Balancing Act of Women's Ministry

"Debbie, what words of encouragement do you have for me?" she asked. The retreat was over and we were making our way to the airport. All the details of the women's ministry dinner had gone off without a hitch. After months of planning, hundreds of women had laughed and visited over a delicious dinner. They had been an attentive and appreciative audience. But despite her joy and enthusiasm over the success of the evening, she was a weary women's ministry leader in need of encouragement.

You may be feeling the same way.

When I heard her question, two words and an image popped into my mind. The words were *hold* and *balance*. The image was a woman acrobat walking in the center of a high tight rope, long balance stick in hand (like you'd see in a circus).

I hope you find encouragement as I explain the words and imagery here. . .

I absolutely love meeting women's ministry leaders around the country as I travel and speak. These women are bright and enthusiastic servant leaders. (If you're reading this, I'm describing you!) From my position in the stands as a speaker, I get to see two parallel planes of leadership going on as these leaders plan for and pull off events that point women to Christ: *doing* and *being*.



Doing and Being

Today, we can go to the internet or visit a local Christian bookstore to find countless resources for the *doing* of women's ministry--- DVD based Bible studies, fellowship themes, clever titles for our ministries, advice columns on working out details of our next retreat, etc. What a rich, creative time of *doing* ministry we're living in today! We are so blessed!

Doing is the easy part of women's ministry.

But as leaders, here's the hard part: we can't neglect the *being* side of women's ministry.

Being is who we are. It's what's happening inside our hearts, originating from our precious personal, private relationship with the Lord. Out of this relationship flow the attitudes of our hearts that shape our words and actions as we go about the *doing* of ministry.

Think of these two elements- *doing* and *being*- as the opposite ends of the balance pole held by the woman on the tight rope I mentioned earlier.

If the *being* part is missing, we can *do* while plowing over people, tossing grenades of harsh words or expressing a demanding attitude in the process. This can hurt and offend those around us, undermining and negating any activities we're doing. (No leader can please everyone, but repeated words like, "I'm not participating in _____ if *she's* in charge," indicate this is may be happening.)

On the other end of the balance pole, if the *doing* element is missing, nothing gets done. There are no intentional activities scheduled to encourage women to get together and grow in community. That's where we learn to live out our faith in Christ by exercising love, acceptance, and grace to those around us.

So how do we maintain a balance between the two? I think it's in remembering to *hold*: hold Him tightly and hold our ministry dreams loosely.



Hold Him Tightly

Leadership is born out of our *being* in a relationship with the Lord. Communing with Jesus is our fuel, our food for service. It keeps us going when we're tired. It reenergizes us when we're weary. It breathes life into the activity of ministry to women. Any form of "Christian leadership" that's taking place apart from intimate connection with Christ isn't spiritual leadership at all. It's a worldly form of leadership that just happens to be performed within the walls of a church building or ministry headquarters. There's a big difference.

No woman needs time with Jesus more than a women's ministry leader. Hold tightly to Him through Bible study and prayer. If He is neglected in your personal life, it's a sure way to get out of balance and fall off the tight rope of ministry. My roughest times in ministry have been those when I focused on telling other women how to have a relationship with the Lord while neglecting my own relationship with Him. This can happen to anyone. Be on guard and remember, He wants you more than He wants your service!

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." *Being* may begin with a time of day where you practice the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible study--- but it's more than that. It's not a compartmentalized section of your calendar. Instead, it's keeping Jesus first and foremost in your thoughts, His lingering aroma dancing in your senses and wafting off you like a fine perfume as you go about your day of *doing*.



Hold Your Ministry Loosely

When we have big dreams, ideas, and plans for ministry, it's easy for our hearts to get attached to them. We start holding those dreams with a clenched fist, even if we started out with them resting lightly in an open palm. The investment of our time and energy (whether it's emotional, physical, or financial) can cause the fingers of our heart to slowly, subtly close around a ministry so tightly that nothing short of a couple of sticks of dynamite can pry them loose.

We can never forget that all ministry is first and foremost His, not ours. Hold your ministry dreams in an open palm.

On my bookshelf of "personal classics" sits the book, *The Pursuit of God*, by A.W.Tozer. The last page contains a beautiful prayer that reads. . .

Lord, I would trust Thee completely, I would be altogether Thine; I would exalt Thee above all. I desire that I may feel no sense of possessing anything outside of Thee. I want constantly to be aware of Thy overshadowing Presence and to hear Thy speaking Voice. I long to live in restful sincerity of heart. I want to live so fully in the Spirit that all my thought may be as sweet incense ascending to Thee and every act of my life may be an act of worship. Therefore I pray in the words of Thy great

servant of old, "I beseech Thee so for to cleanse the intent of mine heart with the unspeakable gift of Thy grace, that I ay perfectly love Thee and worthily praise Thee." And all this I confidently believe Thou wilt grant me through the merits of Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.

I encourage you to hold tightly to Him and hold loosely to your ministry. In that way, you'll strike a wise balance between the *being* and *doing* required for effective women's ministry to take place.

P.S. If I can be a help to you or your ministry, please contact me. None of us can do women's ministry leadership alone.