



BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

A COMMUNITY OF WOMEN

**The State of Women
in Baptist Life
Reading Guide for
Women in Ministry**



» Table of Contents

Introduction	2-3
Getting Started (pg 2)	
Group Covenant (pg 3)	

A Community of Women	4-5
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Reflection and Discussion	6-9
Your Personal Experience (pg 6-7)	
Your Community (pg 8)	
Taking Action (pg 9)	

Notes and Reflection	10
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GETTING STARTED

The following reading guide is meant to be used alongside the State of Women in Baptist Life Report 2021. This report, commissioned by Baptist Women in Ministry, tracks the trends of women serving in and preparing for ministry in the Baptist world. This year's report also revealed the results of a survey aimed to discover the obstacles that women continue to face in ministry and the levels of congregational support for women in ministry. If you have not already seen the report, scan the QR code below to find out more.

This is one of two resources created to be read alongside the report. This reading guide is for women in ministry. The other resource is for supporters of women in ministry, which we encourage you to share with the supporters in your personal and professional life. Follow the QR code below to share.

If you are a woman in ministry or a group of women in ministry you are in the right place. We encourage you to use the following guide either on your own as a personal reflection on your experiences in ministry or with a group of other women in ministry as conversation tool.

In whatever way you use it, we are glad you found your way to this guide. While reading through the report, you might see some of your own experiences in ministry reflected in the pages. As you think through the findings of the report and how they relate to your experiences, we encourage you to remember that you are not alone. You are a part of a community of women who have faced similar obstacles, had similar positive experiences, and whose ministry is invaluable to the community of God and the ministry of the gospel.



SCAN THE QR CODE

Scan the QR code to visit the State of Women in Baptist Life webpage where you can see the full report, share the discussion guide for supporters of women in ministry, view the survey results, watch the webinar release, and read the previous reports.

GROUP COVENANT

If you are using this guide with a group of women in ministry, review this group covenant before starting.

After reading, discuss if there any amendments or additions your group would like to make to this covenant.

- **Practice Confidentiality**

- No one should share stories or comments from other group members without explicit permission.

- **Listen Attentively and Respect Compassionately**

- Each member should listen to each other with compassion and respect. Avoid interrupting one another or trying to "fix" the experiences of another group member.

- **Be Open and Honest**

- Just as you will respect and listen to other members of the group, they will respect and listen to you. Be open and honest as you share.

- **Share Time Equitably**

- Promote the participation of all group members, and try to share time equitably with one another.

- **Avoid pointing fingers**

- While being honest about your experiences, try to separate people from the problem. Avoid casting blame on certain people or groups of people in your community.

A COMMUNITY OF WOMEN

Firstly, thank you. This report was made possible because of you and all Baptist women in ministry represented throughout the report.

In the next two pages take time to read through the report and the reflections provided. Discuss as a group or use the space on the following page for personal notes.

Read through pages 2-9 of the report that detail the barriers that hinder women in ministry.

As you read through the obstacles in the report, you might relate your own experience to the statistics throughout Part I. May you take solace in the fact that you are not alone as you face these obstacles.

Read page 10 of the report on some of the quotes about positive experiences of women in ministry.

As you read through these quotes, think of a quote you could add to that page. And may you celebrate that you are not alone in your positive experiences in ministry.

A COMMUNITY OF WOMEN

Read through Part II of the report (pages 17-28).

As you read, know that you are likely counted somewhere among the numbers in Part II. May you celebrate this inclusion and the inclusion of all other women in ministry who are working toward similar goals to embody Christ-like love to those around them.

As you read the State of Women in Baptist Life Report 2021, know that in the obstacles you face, in the celebratory and grace-filled moments of joy, and in your everyday ministry, you are not alone but among a community of women also working to bring about the kingdom of God.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Your Personal Experience

Knowing that you are a part of a community of women, discuss the questions in this section with a group of women in ministry.

You may also go through this section on your own and will find space for notes and personal reflection at the end of this guide.

Take some time to discuss/reflect on these questions.

- Where do you see your own experiences in ministry mirrored in Part I of report?
- What are some of the barriers you've faced in ministry?
- What are some of your positive experiences you've had where you were fully supported as a woman in ministry?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Your Personal Experience

Which section spoke to you the most? Why?

Boulder-sized obstacles (page 3)

Gender discrimination (pages 4-5)

Daily struggles (pages 5-6)

Sexual Harassment and Assault (page 7)

Intersectionality (page 8)

Effects of COVID-19 (page 9)

Positive experiences (page 10)

Take some time to discuss/reflect on these questions.

- How do these obstacles affect your ability to minister effectively?
- Are there steps you can take or advocates you can enlist to help mitigate the presence and effects of these obstacles on your ministry?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Your Community

Read through pages 11–16 of the report, which are about congregational support of women in ministry.


- Thinking of your own ministry setting (congregational or non-congregational), what are the ways your community successfully supports women in ministry?
- Thinking of your own ministry setting (congregational or non-congregational), what are the ways your community falls short of supporting women in ministry?

The report offers a few suggestions of how a community can better support women in ministry on pages 13–16.

- How is your community doing well in these areas?
- Where is there room for improvement?
- What are some of the ways you can contribute to that improvement?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Taking Action



Think of the women who came before you who inspired and helped your journey to ministry.

- Thinking of the women who came before you, what kinds of things did they do to help you, inspire you, or advocate for you? Share some stories as a group.
- Are there ways you could be that woman today for other women and girls in your community who are considering going into ministry?
- Thinking specifically of your ministry setting, what are some ways you can help empower and advocate for women and girls in your community?



BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

BWIM would love to hear about your experience of reading through the report with the help of this guide.

Email your thoughts to lauraellis@bwim.info.

You can support BWIM's work in creating more resources like the *State of Women in Baptist Life Report* and this Reading Guide by donating at

www.bwim.info/give.

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