

Growing Into Our Convictions

A Resource Guide for Cultivating Cultures of Belonging

Cultivating a culture of belonging is not accomplished through a single conversation, seminar, or initiative. It is the ongoing work of formation—learning to recognize the image of God in one another, receive the gifts God has entrusted to His people, and create communities where women and men flourish according to gifting and calling.

The resources in this guide are intended to help individuals, ministry teams, and churches continue growing in their understanding and practice of mutuality. Some resources explore biblical and theological foundations. Others address leadership development, church culture, and the practical work of cultivating belonging.

Together, they invite us to continue growing into the convictions we already hold.

Understanding the Biblical Vision

Our practices are rooted in our theology

These resources explore Scripture, theology, and the biblical foundations for women and men serving together according to gifting and calling.

Tell Her Story

Nijay K. Gupta

Gupta explores the significant role women played in the story of Scripture and the early church. Through careful biblical scholarship and accessible writing, he helps readers rediscover the ways women participated in God's mission.

Best for: Individuals, pastors, Bible study groups, and churches beginning this conversation.

From Genesis To Junia: An Honest Search For What the Bible Really Says about Women in Leadership

Preston Sprinkle

A careful, Scripture-centered exploration of women's leadership in the church, examining key biblical texts and theological perspectives with humility, honesty, and a commitment to thoughtful dialogue.

Best for: Church leaders and individuals seeking a balanced biblical foundation for conversations about women in ministry.

Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women

Lucy Peppiatt

Peppiatt examines key biblical passages often discussed in conversations about women in ministry and offers a compelling vision of partnership, mutuality, and shared calling rooted in Scripture.

Best for: Those seeking a biblical foundation for women serving in ministry leadership.

The Blue Parakeet

Scot McKnight

McKnight provides a framework for reading Scripture faithfully while engaging difficult passages and long-held assumptions. This resource is especially helpful for those seeking to understand how interpretation shapes our practices.

Best for: Pastors, leaders, and those exploring questions of biblical interpretation.

Paul and Gender

Cynthia Long Westfall

A more scholarly exploration of Paul's teaching related to gender, leadership, and mutuality. Westfall provides a thorough biblical resource for those wanting deeper study.

Best for: Pastors, teachers, and those seeking advanced study.

Cultivating Women in Ministry

Moving from affirmation toward flourishing

Affirmation creates opportunity, but intentional cultivation creates pathways where women can develop, lead, and flourish.

Growing Women in Ministry

Anna Morgan

Morgan offers practical wisdom for churches seeking to intentionally identify, develop, and support women in ministry leadership. This resource moves beyond the question of whether women can lead and explores how churches cultivate environments where women can flourish.

Best for: Pastors, leadership teams, ministry leaders, and women exploring ministry leadership.

Emboldened: A Vision for Empowering Women in Ministry

Tara Beth Leach

Leach offers a compelling vision for the Church when women are empowered to serve according to their God-given calling. Through biblical reflection and pastoral experience, she invites churches to move beyond affirmation toward intentional encouragement and development.

Best for: Church leaders, women in ministry, and congregations seeking to cultivate healthier leadership cultures.

When Women Lead

Carolyn Moore

Moore explores the realities of women leading within the Church, drawing from her own experience as a pastor and leader. She helps readers consider both the challenges women encounter and the gifts women bring to ministry leadership.

Best for: Pastors, leadership teams, and churches seeking to better understand and support women leaders.

Creating Cultures of Belonging

Moving from what we believe to what people experience

Belonging is not simply created through invitation. It is cultivated through intentional practices, relationships, and cultures that communicate value, trust, and recognition.

Creating Cultures of Belonging

Beth Birmingham & Eeva Sallinen Simard

A practical resource for nonprofit and ministry leaders seeking to cultivate environments where people experience belonging, contribute their gifts, and participate fully in the life of the organization.

This resource helps leaders move beyond the question, “Are people invited?” toward the deeper question, “Have we created the conditions where people can truly belong and flourish?”

Best for: Church leadership teams, ministry teams, nonprofit leaders, and those seeking to understand culture formation.

A Church Called Tov

Scot McKnight & Laura Barringer

An exploration of how church culture is shaped through everyday practices. McKnight and Barringer offer a framework for recognizing the difference between healthy and unhealthy cultures and invite churches toward goodness, trust, honor, and flourishing.

Best for: Church leaders and congregations evaluating the culture they are creating.

Pursuing God’s Will Together

Ruth Haley Barton

Barton explores how communities can practice discernment through listening, humility, prayer, and shared wisdom. This resource helps leadership teams learn practices that honor the voices and gifts of others.

Best for: Leadership teams, boards, and ministry groups.

Forming Leaders Who Cultivate Belonging

The work we do within ourselves

Healthy cultures are cultivated by people who are continually being formed. Before we create environments where others flourish, we must allow God to shape us into leaders who notice, listen, receive, and serve.

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership

Ruth Haley Barton

Barton explores the connection between spiritual formation and leadership, reminding leaders that who we are becoming shapes the communities we create.

Best for: Pastors, ministry leaders, and those seeking deeper leadership formation.

The Emotionally Healthy Leader

Peter Scazzero

Scazzero explores how emotional health and spiritual maturity impact leadership and organizational culture.

Best for: Leaders seeking to cultivate healthier relationships and communities.

Women Growing Into Their Calling

Resources for identity, formation, and faithful leadership

These resources are especially helpful for women who are discerning God’s call, developing their leadership gifts, or seeking encouragement as they serve in ministry.

Made to Lead: Empowering Women for Ministry

Nicole Massie Martin

Martin offers encouragement for women who sense God's call to ministry leadership. Drawing from Scripture, personal experience, and stories of women leaders, she challenges women to embrace their God-given gifts and recognize their place in God's mission.

Best for: Women discerning ministry leadership, emerging leaders, and those seeking encouragement in their calling.

Entrusted to Lead

Donna Pisani

Pisani offers wisdom and encouragement for women navigating the call to leadership. She explores what it means to faithfully steward the influence, responsibility, and opportunities God entrusts to us.

Best for: Women discerning leadership, emerging women leaders, and those seeking encouragement in ministry.

The Dream of You

Jo Saxton

Saxton invites women to explore identity, calling, and purpose through the lens of God's design. She encourages women to recognize their gifts, embrace their stories, and step into the leadership God has entrusted to them.

Best for: Women discerning their calling and emerging leaders.

Ready to Rise

Jo Saxton

A practical resource for women navigating leadership, growth, and resilience. Saxton offers encouragement for leading with courage, authenticity, and faithfulness.

Best for: Women already serving in leadership or preparing for greater responsibility.

Nailing It: Why Successful Leadership Demands Suffering and Surrender

Nicole Massie Martin

Martin explores Christian leadership through the lens of surrender, sacrifice, and dependence on God. She reminds leaders that faithful leadership is not simply about achievement or influence, but about becoming more deeply formed in Christ.

Best for: Women and men serving in ministry leadership who desire deeper spiritual formation.

Continuing the Conversation

Learning happens best in community. Consider engaging these resources with:

- Your pastoral team
- Church board or leadership team
- Ministry teams
- Small groups
- Mentoring relationships

As you continue, consider asking:

- What assumptions are we examining?
- What are we learning about belonging?
- Where might God be inviting us to grow?
- What practices help people experience our convictions?
- How can we better recognize and develop the gifts God has placed among us?

