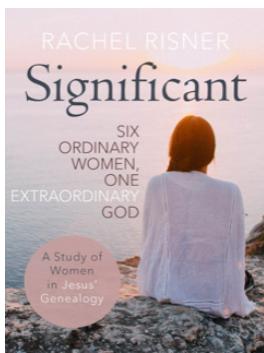


TouchPoint

The North American Baptist Conference Women's Connection Newsletter

WINTER 2022



**Women's Connection is featuring *Significant*,
by Rachel Risner as our theme study for 2022**

Significant – Six Ordinary Women, One Extraordinary God – A Study of Women in Jesus' Genealogy

Significant—what comes to your mind when you hear this word... *having meaning, having or likely to have influence or effect, important?* Do you often wonder how your life can have significance in this world of uncertainty?

Rachel Risner, author of Significant offers Biblical counsel on how to walk by faith in the face of uncertainty.

There's a big difference between living a life trusting in the fake stability of the world and living a life of significance with an unshakeable God. We've all gotten the wind knocked out of our sails, but it's time to keep going forward. In this study, learn from scripture how to:

- Dig in your heels with tenacity when you feel like giving up.
- Worship instead of worry when life throws you curve balls.
- Quit living skin-deep by cultivating the inner beauty of trust in God.

Come for this timely six topic journey. Walk alongside real women of the Bible through their struggles and successes, and discover how to become a woman of significance.

LEARN FROM THE LIVES OF

Sarah	<i>Hot Mess to Matriarch</i> A Woman of Beauty
Leah	<i>Unlovely But Loved</i> A Woman of Worship
Tamar	<i>Forsaken to Foremother</i> A Woman of Mercy
Rahab	<i>Zero to Hero</i> A Woman of Courage
Ruth	<i>Pauper to Princess</i> A Woman of Tenacity
Bathsheba	<i>Invisible to Influencial</i> A Woman of Influence

Resources included with the study:
All resources found at rachelrisner.com

As I studied and wrote about six unlikely women in Jesus' genealogy, the Lord showed me that it wasn't about my abilities or experience, but about my willingness to serve Him. – Rachel Risner

- Online video lessons and discussion guides - no separate Leader Kit needed!
- Promotional materials for Bible study group use. Find promoting your own Significant study group.
- eBook: *Level Up Your Women's Ministry with Social Media*. Find a free e-book on leveraging the powerful tool of social media for your ministry.
- RachelRisner.com. Find encouraging posts, book giveaways, shareable images, a chance to subscribe, pics of her family, and more goodies on her blog rachelrisner.com/blog/



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SAY, "YES" TO GOD

An encouraging word from
Rachel Risner, Author of *Significant*

When a friend tapped me on the shoulder to write a women's Bible study, I thought, "yeah, right!" As a ministry wife and homeschool mom, I just didn't think I had the bandwidth. But God knew better.

I continued to tell God I didn't have the time, talent, or experience, but He continued to prod. So, finally, I gave in.

Then something amazing happened. As I studied and wrote about six unlikely women in Jesus' genealogy, the Lord showed me that it wasn't about my abilities or experience, but about my willingness to serve Him. After all—He had a track record of using women who were full of flaws to do remarkable things.

He took my meager offering of a few moments here and there, and a teeny bit of writing experience and—like the meager loaves and fishes—He multiplied it beyond my expectations. I now have a full-fledged women's Bible study published to share with women worldwide. Only because of Him.

I'm beginning to learn firsthand what happens when we stop worrying about God's calling on our lives making sense, and instead start obeying.

God doesn't call us to things we can do without Him—He calls us to things that are beyond our abilities to increase our dependence upon Him.

Maybe for you that's not poring over scriptures and crafting sentences during the bits and pieces of your day, like me.

Maybe for you it looks like taking the helm of a ministry that's currently in a nosedive. Maybe it's saying, "yes" to that speaking opportunity, even though you feel like you'd rather hide behind the curtains. Or maybe it's taking the backseat and developing a younger leader, even when you know it would be faster to just do it yourself.

Or maybe it's adopting that kid, or befriending that shut in, or caring for your aging parents—the list can go on and on.

Whatever God's calling you to, dive right in. Sure, it can be uncomfortable, and you may be the least qualified. But God's not in the business of calling the qualified.

Take Moses, for example. When God called Moses from the burning bush, Moses was sure there was some mistake. Exodus 3:11 says, "Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'"

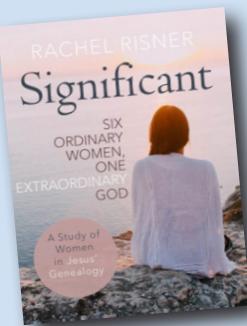
Fast forward a few years and Moses was leading God's people through the Red Sea on dry ground. Talk about a change in confidence—or should I say, Godfidence!

Let's allow God to take our, "are you sure about this, God?" and turn it into a beautiful success story that only He could write—all for His glory.

So what's holding you back? Let it go, and give Him the pen today. You won't regret it.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Rachel Risner is an author, pastor's wife, and homeschool mom of eight. She lives in the beautiful, rolling hills of Ohio's Amish country. *Significant: Six Ordinary Women, One Extraordinary God* is her first Bible study. She writes online at rachelrisner.com.



Women's Connection is offering your NAB church **ONE FREE COPY** of *Significant* by Rachel Risner

This copy can be requested by a woman in leadership from your church.

Send your request to Heather Senges at hsenges@telus.net. Please include your name, address, phone number, church and leadership position in your email.

The Risk and Reward of Leadership

Christine Pfortmueller

Interview by Amber Dowd Women's Connection Leadership Team



*O*ur team felt it would be useful to highlight some of the women of NAB who are working in ministry leadership positions within their churches and communities. Our hope is in doing so, we can encourage and support other NAB women in leadership. Consider this to be a Proverbs 27:17 moment, where we present iron to sharpen iron, highlighting the story of one to serve as wisdom for many.

So, to begin I'd like to introduce you to Christine Pfortmueller. Christine is the Executive Director at Bethany Baptist Church in Vancouver, B.C. She works closely alongside the Transitional Lead Pastor in overseeing the church's operations and ministry. She started this role in February 2020, so it has been a challenging transition, to say the least. Along with this, Christine is the daughter of our very own Women's Connection Team Member, Heather Senges.

Amber: How did you end up working as the Executive Director at your church?

Christine: I morphed into this position over the course of 25 years. Becoming an Executive Director of a church had not been an initial career goal. I am an accountant by trade, actually. But over the years I worked on staff in various roles, from Childrens' Ministries Director for 15 years as well as serving as the Board Treasurer. My relationships and roles grew from there. Having been born and bred in this church, I have picked up extensive organizational knowledge over the years.

The issue that pressed for me to become Executive Director was when our Executive Pastor resigned in the Fall of 2019. This prompted the board to ask me to take on the role of Executive Pastor. However, we concluded that the job wasn't quite right for me since I didn't have pastoral or theological training. The position was thus redefined as Executive Director, with the pastoral responsibilities of the role being pulled out. The plan was to hire an Associate Pastor to cover those responsibilities, which was put on hold due to Covid.

Amber: How does this distinction between Executive Pastor and Executive Director play out?

Christine: As Director, I run everything in the church that's not directly ministry-related. This includes overseeing facilities management, rentals, corporate and financial matters. Although I was hired before Covid hit,

by the time I started it was clear that dealing with Covid would be a major part of my job. Much of my time is spent managing protocols and discerning what is best for our congregation in light of government mandates.

I also work closely with the Lead Pastor on matters related to setting the church's strategic direction and implementation. We have a transitional pastor right now, so my contextual knowledge of our congregation has been helpful, especially related to how we got to where we are today. I also lead openings in worship services, and although I've been invited to preach I find it outside my comfort zone- maybe one day!

Amber: Does gender have any bearing on whether someone is called a pastor in your church?

Christine: No, we don't qualify leadership based on if someone is male or female. The elders discussed this ten years ago and concluded that the distinction is based on training. Basically, if someone has theological Bible school training, then they can qualify as Pastor. Otherwise, as is my case, one is named Director.

With that said, there have been times when I have wondered if my gender affects how my voice is received compared to my male counterparts. I've noticed that a male pastor can repeat something I've already said and it tends to land more authoritatively. So even though our church affirms

an equal leadership model, there are still concerns within our congregation regarding female leaders having a lesser perceived authority.

Amber: How has your role helped you grow or brought you joy?

Christine: Since I sort of "fell" into this role, it has been motivating for me to find ways to grow in my education as a leader. This past fall I was invited to be a spiritual companion for my friend and former youth ministry colleague, Kelly, as she went through a course called Coalition for Youth Ministry Excellence. As her companion, we walked through a Spiritual Formation journey together. I loved the rich content and how it fostered reflection and introduced me to various ministry and leadership books. It motivates me to discover more learning opportunities. These past few years have been some of the most spiritually developing years of my life. I've always been in church culture because of my upbringing, but it's been impactful for me to step into leadership. The experience of risk-taking has helped me grow in many ways.

Amber: What are some particular challenges you've encountered in this role?

Christine: I'm a strong leader with strong opinions, but I don't like conflict. My default is to always find a way to mediate and talk through things. I've had to come to expect that somebody will almost always disagree with me, since I'm the



Purpose Statement

Women's Connection exists to connect women of the North American Baptist Conference, encouraging them in their desire to serve God. Our team is committed to providing resources to help women deepen their faith and equip them for ministry wherever God places them.



Our Core Values

CALLING AND WORTH

We value the essential role women play in ministry.

QUALITY RESOURCES

We value God's Word and seek resources that are Biblically sound, applicable and accessible.

BROADER CONNECTION

We value supporting the broader vision of the North American Baptist Conference and developing a connection among North American Baptist Conference women.

LEGACY AND THE FUTURE

We value the legacy of women who have gone before us and are committed to engaging the next generation.

final decision-maker on many different matters for a large group of people. Covid has especially heightened this dynamic. This isn't always easy because it's people who are part of my church family, and even my immediate family, that I am at times in disagreement with. I've had to learn to ask myself how I choose to respond when these conflicts come up and speak firmly for what the church has decided. I'm learning to discern what's worth fighting for, and when I'm willing to have give-and-take. I'm becoming more comfortable with simply being who I am, not necessarily changing myself to keep peace. This is all very challenging.

Amber: In light of the challenges and joys you're experiencing, do you have any nuggets of wisdom to offer other women in church leadership?

Christine: I think asking yourself the question of "How are you going to respond?" is important, along with this idea of being consistent with who you know yourself to be. Women tend to feel the need to be peacemakers, but in leadership this isn't always an option. Be honest, have integrity in your beliefs, and don't allow others to trample over you with their opinions. Be wary of getting drawn into following everybody's whims. Choose to have confidence in your leadership. You were put in this role, and so you can embrace the authority it gives you. Of course, this involves asking God for wisdom and trusting Him to direct you. And along with this, you'll need to be willing to admit when things don't end up going well and owning your mistakes. *Leadership is not about fighting against people for what you want, but more about stepping into your leadership role with confidence and handling the results of your decisions with both strength and humility. Church leadership is ultimately a relational role, and you've been given the task of providing a path for others to follow.*

Amber: I imagine there are challenges that come from leading in the church you grew up in. How do you navigate church leadership with church fellowship?

Christine: This can be a big challenge, especially with close friends and family. Sometimes close relationships can

see you as a source to influence what they want. It's important for me to communicate when I feel people are putting me in that position. I've found it helps to send them to a neutral party to discuss the issue. Sadly there are times when distancing is necessary as well.

I've discovered that it's complicated to move from inside the church to above the church. Sometimes I feel like I have nobody to talk to about life burdens, such as parenting, conflicts etc. because they're confidential or involve key people. I have a good friend who's on the board, and because of our common knowledge I find her safe to discuss more confidential matters. Fellow pastors and staff can also serve well in this role. I also think maintaining friendships outside of the congregation is helpful, such as the cohort experience I had with my friend Kelly. Personally this is something I'd like to explore more for myself.

Amber: Any last thoughts for our readers?

Christine: I just want to encourage women to continue learning and exploring new ideas. Seek out books and a community that will foster learning. Take time to put words on what you're feeling and be willing to see things from new angles and viewpoints. Leading with empathy and understanding, yet standing with confidence on your intuitions and decisions, will sustain you in your leadership.

Thanks, Christine! We appreciate you sharing your story with us. God bless you!

BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY CHRISTINE

Church leaders

Leading With A Limp - Dan B. Allender

Canoeing the Mountains (this one is excellent!) - Tod Bolsinger

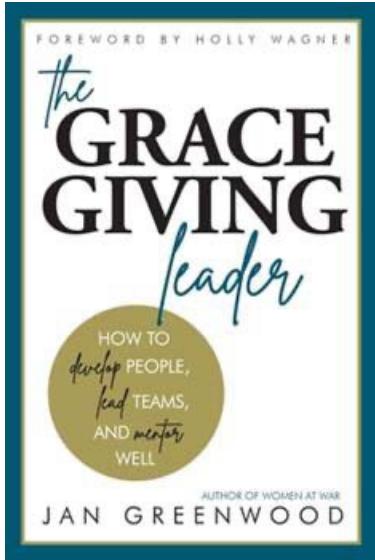
Thought-provoking

Messy Spirituality - Mike Yaconelli

Redeeming How We Talk - Ken Wytsma



BOOK LINKS



The Grace Giving Leader: How to Develop People, Lead Teams, and Mentor Well

by Jan Greenwood

ABOUT THE BOOK

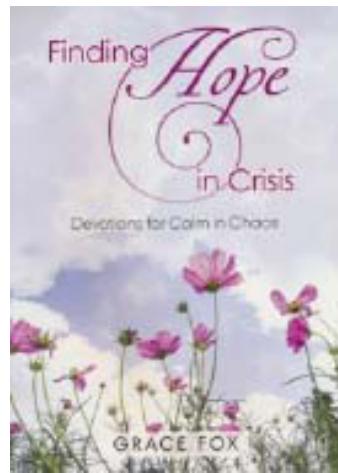
Many of us spend our entire leadership life lost in performance and striving for success. In effect, we work to earn what God wants to give us for free - grace.

Like many of you, Jan Greenwood's journey has included pain and failures, but it has also included healing and triumphs. By God's grace, she discovered some life-transforming leadership principles that help her lead and mentor effectively. If you grasp these ten secrets, you can take your limited experience, resources, or influence and find greater wholeness, health, and leadership success.

Whether you are a young leader embarking on your first leadership assignment, in a season of transition, or afteryears of aiming high in the workforce or nonprofit sector, Jan is eager to intersect your life in this critical season of your development as a leader. Together, you will launch out on a journey of personal growth and leadership development so that you can help as many people as possible.

Learn how grace empowers you and others, connects, matures, is not about you always about others, loves, and multiplies.

Jan's book is filled with encouragement, provoking challenges and grace. Discussion questions follow each chapter and her words encourage the reader to be that grace-filled leader.



Finding Hope in Crisis – Devotions for Calm in Chaos

by Grace Fox

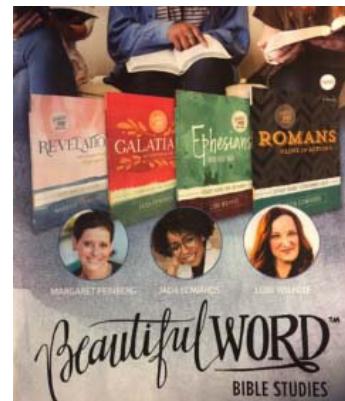
ABOUT THE BOOK

Life can change in a nanosecond. Crisis strikes, and we wonder if we will survive. Our soul longs for calm amid the crisis. This little book, 90 brief meditations, was written to bring encouragement,

hope and peace. With personal stories and insightful perspectives, Grace Fox brings you daily devotions that will cause you to pause and refocus on the truth that God's strength will carry you onward.

Each devotion includes a key Bible verse, a time to pause and read, and then an action step or a question to ponder. There's also a short prayer for the moment and an encouraging quote from others who have walked through times of crisis. They are daily reminders of God's presence, and filled with promises and He will renew strength and restore hope.

Grace Fox is a career global worker and international speaker at women's events. She has written 9 books and is a member of the writing team for Proverbs 31 Ministries. She and her husband Gene, live on a sailboat in British Columbia.



Beautiful Word Bible Studies

by Dannah Gresh

ABOUT THE BOOK

Connect God's Word to your daily life through vibrant video teaching, group discussion, and deep personal study to receive your own beautiful Word from God.

Revelation – Margaret Feinberg

Galatians – Jada Edwards

Romans – Jada Edwards

Ephesians – Lori Wilhite

Resources can be found at: ChurchSource.com/BWBS

