

WOMEN AND MEN IN FLOURISHING PARTNERSHIPS

PROCESSING GUIDE

By Dr. Rob Dixon

Since Genesis 1, God's plan has been for women and men to partner together in ministry. This processing guide is designed to help you and your community get practical about that. It will help you evaluate the status of your mixed-gender ministry partnerships and give you ideas for ways to strengthen those partnerships. You and/or your group can do this in one session, or you may want to extend this conversation to multiple sessions.

First, reflect on and process the following questions:

- What has formed your perspective on mixed-gender ministry partnerships? Any Bible passages come to mind? Books? Media?
- The Building God's Church Together videos and studies have been designed to help you establish a biblical foundation for mixed-gender ministry partnerships. How are you responding to those studies? What has become clear for you? Where might you still have questions?
- Think of a ministry partnership you've had with someone of the opposite gender. What was great about that partnership? What was challenging?
- The Session 5 video spot-lighted three elements of flourishing mixed-gender ministry partnerships: theological agreement, healthy character, and abundant communication. Which of these three attributes feel like strengths for you? Growth edges?
- What other attributes could contribute to flourishing mixed-gender ministry partnerships?

Next, spend some time reflecting on the following case studies. What would need to happen in each situation in order to foster flourishing mixed-gender ministry partnerships?

Case Study #1

Bekah and Wayne are co-leading a small group, and it's off to a great start. Lots of people are coming and they've begun to reach out in their neighborhood. So, things are growing and yet Bekah and Wayne have noticed a problem. Every time they do Bible study, all eyes turn to Wayne, even when Bekah is leading. This makes both Bekah and Wayne uncomfortable. What should they do?

Case Study #2

If he's honest with himself, Bill considers the chance to date and to hopefully, God willing, meet a wife as a big part of coming to church. Bill is also eager to serve and lead, so he signs up to lead a small group. In Bill's church, women and men are often paired together in leadership, so Miriam, the small group pastor, has concerns about the implications for Bill and for whomever his co-leader might turn out to be. How might Miriam handle the situation?

Case Study #3

Layla is the church's small group pastor, and in that role, she serves on the church's pastoral leadership team. The lead pastor, Jack, leads that team and leads in a style that is stereotypically masculine. For instance, his meetings are all business. Jack's leadership watch words are efficiency, productivity, and getting the job done. Layla has a different, more stereotypically feminine style. Her governing values are relational harmony, people feeling heard, and seeking an experience with the Lord as a team. Over time, Layla is feeling less and less satisfied on the team and in her role. Kevin, the church's associate pastor, can see the tension. How should he handle it?

As you finish these case studies, debrief using the following questions:

- Do any of these case studies resonate with your experience in ministry?
- From your reflection/processing and from your work on the case studies, what have you learned about mixed-gender ministry partnerships?
- What is something concrete that you can do to help the mixed-gender ministry partnerships you are a part of flourish?
- Spend some time praying for the mixed-gender ministry partnerships in your life and ministry.

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If you'd like to learn more about women and men in flourishing ministry partnerships, check out Rob Dixon's book *Together in Ministry: Women and Men in Flourishing Partnerships*, available September 2021 from InterVarsity Press Academic (<https://www.ivpress.com/together-in-ministry>). Rob is also available for consultation and coaching on this topic. Send him an email at rdixondis@gmail.com to hear more.

