

# Introduction

## Live for the Line, Not the Dot

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**A** dot is a single fixed point. A woman's life is filled with innumerable dots. She sets goals and makes her plans. Dots are things we treasure, value, and prioritize. They are the things in which we invest our lives. Dots can be things such as an education, job, marriage, financial security, or having children. These things are good gifts from God, but they should never become ultimate things in a woman's life. I believe a woman is a product of her doxology. What she worships is reflected in her life. The word "worship" finds its roots in the words "shape" and "worthy." What she worships, values, or elevates as worthy profoundly shapes everything about her; it ultimately sets the trajectory for her life.

A line is a continuous segment between two fixed points. For the believer, the line is infinite and eternal. It begins in eternity past when, "... he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph. 1:4). It ends in eternity future. As He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 22:13). Our temporal and earthly line is lived between birth and death. We walk it day in and day out "by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). What a woman is looking to, the things which captivate her attention, and the forces driving her may be the greatest indicators of whether she is living for the line or the dot. The dot is temporal, and the line is eternal. Paul says, "... we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Whether you are living for the dot (temporal) or

living for the line (eternal) has everything to do with where you fix your eyes. We become what we behold. The greatest part of a woman's life is unseen.

The timeline over the last century has highlighted countless dots for women. These dots are constantly fluctuating. We have more access to education, new vocational fields are open to us, and we have acquired the right to vote. Every decade has brought about new cultural norms about what it means for men and women to relate to one another. What women traditionally do, where we can go, and how we communicate have all changed. It would be nearly impossible to track all the hair and clothing styles that have evolved. Society has sought to alter how we define gender to the point where they want to erase the idea of womanhood altogether. Even with all these changes, some things never change. These are the things located along the line. These truths are eternal, and they transcend culture, time, and generations.

God's design for womanhood is not a dot; it is an enduring line. He spoke creation into existence establishing His Word as our authority (Gen. 1:1). The man's and woman's gender distinctiveness as image-bearers is a necessary dimension to reflect who God is (Gen. 1:27). Eve's companionship with Adam answered his "not good" isolation. Her helper design is a suitable fit complementing every relationship and calling (Gen. 2:18). She was created to be equal in being but diverse in function in every context of life (Gen. 1:27). Their oneness together reflects the community existing in the Godhead (Gen. 2:24). They were put on a mission to spread Eden to the ends of the earth (Gen. 1:28). Their designs were intended to reflect His glory, not their own. Their choice to seek to be Godlike and move towards independence brought about the brokenness of everything and every person (Genesis 3). These biblical truths about our design never change.

Believing these things is counter-cultural. As this century progresses, the indicators are it will only become harder, not easier, to embrace these truths. Women will be forced to choose. Will we cave to the culture (conformation) or will we yield to the potential of a greater change for the glory of God (transformation)? Transformation is radical and often

complicated. It is rarely convenient and seldom comfortable, but at the end of the line, it is ultimately glorious. Women need to be transformed by the “renewing of their mind” (Rom. 12:1-2). Our “dot-like” thinking and living need to be renovated.

This is a strategic moment in time when we must be steadfast in helping women to think and live biblically and live in the context of the church community. Word-based and relationally-driven women’s ministry encourages women to understand who God is and who He created us to be. It is intended to equip women to fulfill our creation design in whatever context we are called—the home, church, workplace, or community. It should be gospel-centered in both its teaching and application. Womanhood will either be defined biblically, or it will be defined culturally.

We need women leaders to be in-the-world-but-not-of-the-world. A leader has been defined as someone who goes before or comes alongside others to bring them to a desired destination. We have much to glean from leaders who have gone before us and shown us the shape of godliness. More often than not we are influenced by godly older women (spiritual mothers) and gospel friends who are fellow pilgrims, coming alongside us as we live along the line. For women of faith, the omega-fixed point, the desired destination at the end of the line, is Heaven.

Why do you do what you do? How you answer this question reveals whether you are living for the line or the dot. There are only two things in this life that are eternal: the Word of God and the souls of man. How you answer this question may also determine what type of women’s ministry you want to cultivate. Ministry among women happens along the line as we do life together centered on the truth of God’s Word. It should be oriented around end-of-the-line thinking and living. It is leading women in light of eternity.

The Word of God was written by forty different writers, in three languages over 1500 years, and yet it is one cohesive story. The fourth question of the *Westminster Larger Catechism* asks: “How doth it appear that the Scriptures are the Word of God?” The answer to the question is: “The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God, by their majesty and purity; by the consent of all the parts, and the scope of the whole, which

is to give all glory to God . . .” This consent and scope principle of Scripture applies to every part of our lives—our chief end is to glorify God. We are a product of our theology. What we believe about God is reflected in our words, actions, and attitudes. When a woman’s theology is fragmented, her life may be incoherent and disjointed. She is living for ephemeral dots and does not understand how all these parts fit together. However, just as every part of Scripture agrees perfectly with every other part, every part or dot in a woman’s life has meaning and significance. In His sovereignty, God aligns the parts of her life to agree with the whole of His purpose for His glory. Biblically speaking, there are no random dots. Nothing in God’s economy is wasted. He uses every relationship, circumstance, and event in our lives for us to “. . . be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29). Women’s ministry operates with clarity and cohesion along the line when this truth undergirds all we do.

We must always remember that life and ministry along the line is only possible in the Spirit. Paul encourages us, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25). Every step a woman takes towards eternity is Spirit-empowered. Mission and mandate are two of the scriptural guardrails that keep us moving toward the desired destination.

The mission begins in a Garden and will end in a City. “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen. 1:28). The mission of image-bearers is to spread Eden to the ends of the earth. Multiplication and fruitfulness will be both biological and spiritual. Because of the fall, we deserved death and fruitlessness, but instead, we were given the promise of Life through a Redeemer (Gen. 3:15). After the fall, Adam’s authority to express dominion and name the creatures was restored because of the gospel promise. In response, Adam gave his wife a new name that sounds like the Hebrew word for “life” or “life-giver”: Eve (Gen. 3:20). Her capacity for biological and spiritual fruitfulness was restored.

The Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission go hand in hand. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). We are called to go and show the life-giving hope of the gospel. Women’s ministry holds the potential to show it as both believable and beautiful. Everywhere we go along the line we have the opportunity to sow gospel seeds in faith, praying disciples might grow. Women’s ministry is teaching “all He has commanded” (Word-based) to Christ’s disciples (relationally-driven). We are encouraged to persevere in the power of His presence because He will be with us to the “end of the age”—the end of the mission.

Titus 2 echoes the cultural and gospel mandates, showing that some discipleship is gender-specific: “But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. . . . Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. . . . but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2: 1, 3-5, 10). This passage is not about building strong women, but rather a strong church. Its aim is teaching women to think and live biblically in the context of the Church because we will do it for eternity. Christ is preparing the Church as His Bride to look more and more like Him. Preparation involves Christ’s redemption on the cross and His sanctification by the Spirit. One of the tools the Spirit may also use is His women engaged in kingdom discipleship, preparing the Bride to bring all of life under the rule and reign of King Jesus.

Investing in the life of another woman is a sacred and life-giving calling. The word “sound” informs our methods and motivations for women’s ministry. It means “healthy or hygienic.” It is robust, strong, whole, full of life, thriving, and flourishing. Women’s ministry must be Word-based (sound doctrine) and relationally-driven (older women and younger women in a discipleship relationship with one another). Sound living, sound relationships, sound women’s ministry, and a

sound church flow out of the teaching of sound doctrine. Spiritual mothers are called to walk out the content of the gospel in the context of their relationships with their spiritual daughters for the glory of God. It is God's strategy to train the next generation of women to live and lead in light of eternity. Titus 2 relationships put the gospel on display to a watching world. They highlight the enduring truth of His Word, so no one will malign or defame it. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isa. 40:8).

This book is filled with women who are living and leading along the line. These women are just like you. They all struggle to believe what is true and are easily distracted with "dot-type" pursuits. Be encouraged though, because these women are fellow pilgrims seeking to be led by the Spirit, to live by the Spirit, and to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-26). They are spiritual mothers who will show you the shape of godliness in their words. They are fellow women's ministry leaders investing in the eternal things: the Word of God and the souls of women. They are gospel friends whose aim is to apply the content of the gospel in the context of their relationships. Their eyes are fixed on the destination, and they will keep praying and walking until they get Home. It is my prayer that the truths contained in this book will help your women's ministry equip the women in your church to think and live biblically in the context of the church community. Come and let's walk the line together.

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