

*Foreword by Irwyn Ince*

# BEYOND THE ROLES

A Biblical Foundation for Women and Ministry

**GENERAL EDITOR MELANIE COGDILL**



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*For Susan Hunt  
and all her spiritual daughters  
and granddaughters  
(Psalm 78:5-7).*

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# Preface

Melanie Cogdill

**P**rofessionally, I am the managing editor of a theological magazine, and as such, I receive hundreds of review copies of books each year. I have tall stacks of books covering my desk. Many of them, frankly, cover issues that have been written by others before. As I look through books every week, I ask myself, why did the author write this? What does this book contribute to the issue that it addresses? Is this book worth an investment of my time to read? There are so many books out there, why does it matter that this one exists?

Not only do I receive review copies of books for work (many of which I did not request), I also am on the hunt for books as resources to equip Christians to grow in their faith by understanding theological truths. With this purpose in mind, a couple of years ago at the Evangelical Theology Society convention I attended for work, I walked the exhibitors hall to see what books were available from the many publishers displaying highlights of their catalog. Since I am involved in women's ministry in my local church and in my denomination, I started noticing there were very few books addressed to women as the primary audience. The ones on display for women in particular focused on the roles women have in seasons of their lives, particularly on parenting and marriage. Granted, this theological conference does not focus on women's ministry or women in ministry, but it made me take note that many non-academic Christian books marketed to women address *only* parenting or marriage.

In the past ten years you can count on one hand books (and, by that, I mean one book) like this one that are a compilation of issues written by a collective of various authors on the topic of women's ministry. This is not a prescriptive how-to book that gives you a "top 10 tips" list for a "successful" women's ministry.

The intent of this book is to address a few contemporary issues women's ministry leadership faces as they minister to women in their churches. For example, five years ago women's ministry didn't have to grapple with ministering to transgendered-identifying people. But Western mores have shifted, and now gender-identity issues are at the forefront of cultural conversations. What does Scripture say about gender identity?

In addition, in the United States, the evangelical church has historically been ethnically homogenous. What does it mean for leaders in women's ministry to reflect the biblical truth of the people of God being made up of every tribe and tongue and people?

One of the most encouraging parts of this project has been connecting with the various women who author these chapters. A couple of writers are long-time ministry partners and friends, some are acquaintances, and others are new contacts altogether. It is amazing to see such diversity represented in these pages, not only ethnically with African-American and Asian writers, but also across generations from 20-something Millennials to Baby Boomers. While there is diversity among the authors in this book, there are also many commonalities among these women—all of them are thoughtful, intelligent, and most of all, they love Christ and serve His Church.

The purpose of this book is two-fold, which is why the book is divided into two parts. One is to posit that women's ministry that lasts instead of fizzles needs to be built on a theological foundation (the content of part one) and not on the latest hip event or ministry trend. The issues and challenges we face in ministry might morph and change over the years, but the foundation on which we address those issues must be rooted in Scripture. Second, it's to bring thoughtful essays to readers to consider issues that face women's ministry or that ministry to women should grapple with during this particular time in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (the content of part two).

As a Women's Ministry Trainer for the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) I hold to and teach complementarianism. I do not advocate for or believe in the ordination of women to either ruling or teaching elders (and neither do any of these contributors). However, you will not find any chapters dealing with the role

of women in the church. There are many academic books and essays that deal with that issue in-depth. This book is also written by women who are members of and attend churches in my denomination (Presbyterian Church in America—PCA), but our readership, we pray, is not limited to women in the PCA; it is for readers who serve as women’s ministry leaders, and for readers who know and interact with Christian women. These truths are relevant to all Christian women and transcend denominational lines.

My prayer is that this content will not only help you contextualize your ministry, but also challenge you to build a women’s ministry on theological truth so that each woman who attends your church is encouraged in her faith and equipped to live a life that reflects the glory of God.

**Melanie Cogdill** is a women’s ministry trainer for the Presbyterian Church in America, the managing editor of the *CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL* (equip.org), and host of the weekly podcast *Postmodern Realities* (available on iTunes).