

THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



Greg: Hey friends, we have Carolyn Moore on the church planting podcast this episode. I was introduced to Carolyn through another stadia staff member and said right away, Carolyn, will you be a guest on the church planting podcast? Carolyn herself as a church planter. She's also an author. She is a doctor of ministry and she has so much to share specifically on about how we as men can better lead and empower women in leadership. But ladies, she has tons to say about how you discover your call, your gifting and ignite your passion in church planting and in church leadership. Well, I'm really excited to have my friend Carolyn more on the church planting podcast. Welcome Carolyn.

Carolyn: Oh, what a privilege to be with you. What a, what a great joy it has been for me to find your whole network. You guys have been a great encouragement to me.

Greg: Thank you. Carolyn and I, we met through a mutual friend, I think a stadia staff member and, um, and got to spend some time together. And I remember after our first zoom call asking, Hey, would you be willing to, you know, do the church planting podcast with me because we've got to get this message out. You have a book that's going to be released. Um, you'll have to tell us about that. And, uh, and just the incredible work you're doing specifically with women in leadership, but with applications for men as well.

Carolyn: Well, when women lead that affects everybody, uh, because when women lead, your perception of women in leadership is, is, uh, is influenced or, uh, you're, you're bringing to the table, your perception of women in leadership. Um, if you are as a pastor, raising up men and women in your care, if you're shepherding an entire flock, then you, then you, obviously your understanding of how women lead or whether or not women can lead or how to help a woman succeed in ministry, all of that impacts how you shepherd the women in your care who are called into leadership.

And so, yeah, my message isn't just for women. It's, It's for the body of Christ, because we all have to learn together how to help women succeed, not just find a spot, but succeed so that the kingdom can be welcomed and advanced across the earth.

Greg: I agree completely, Carolyn, you know, my heart on, on this issue, state, everything stadia is gift based, not gender-based, about him empowering both men and women in diversity and fully. Um, but were you always, at that point? Or did you move to that point?

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Carolyn: That's a great question. Um, I would say, you know, I didn't know enough to know what point I was at until I claimed my call. I was called when I was, uh, 13 years old. That was 45 years ago, 45 years ago in Augusta, Georgia. Nobody was talking about women pastors.

And that was a weird thing. And so nobody knew what to do with that call that I think. It was on my life. Um, so I sort of watered it down a bit and decided at the advice of my pastor to be a children's pastor instead, because you know, that's acceptable. The only problem with that from my perspective is that number one, I am a disaster in a room full of, uh, children.

And second, um, it wasn't my call. It, it wasn't my call. And so when I stepped away from my call, I really stepped away from my faith. I came to figure out, you know, too late in the game that your faith is intricately tied to your call. And so when I stepped away from my faith, I stepped away from my call and I took about 10, 12 years for me to come back to that.

So when I came back to my call, I really had to deal with what it means to be a female pastor. And I can't say that I, like I said, I didn't know enough to know what I believed. I really had to dig into the, had to dig into the word and I had to wrestle with it a good bit. And I had to spend time in prayer.

I had to read the church fathers and try to understand what this meant. And, um, I have to say that for many years, even after I became a pastor, I was very uneasy about my place and I couldn't quite figure out why. And that's really what some of my study came out of this. It's like, okay. I really think I, I accept what the scripture says.

My interpretation of the scripture. I, I accept, uh, female leadership wherever I see it when people are called and equipped for. Why do I still feel uneasy? And why do I feel like the crazy one in the room? You know, when other people don't feel comfortable, why do I feel like the crazy one? So it led me down a path of really doing a good bit of study in the, in the, um, in the whole world of what happens when women lead.

Greg: Okay. So this is fascinating to me because my hunch is there's, there's a lot of men out there leading right now who have daughters or granddaughters or who have women in their church. There are a lot of women out there who are younger or who are maybe 50 or 60 years old and are going, oh, wait, I think I had a call as well.

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And let's talk about this, talk about what you mean by calling. And what that call was for you.

Carolyn: Okay. Well, in my case, that call was rather mystical when I was 13 years old. As I said before, I really, what I was, you know, what was even happening. I was standing in the pulpit on a Sunday night. Do you remember back when we used to do youth services on a Sunday night?

And, um, uh, so I was in the, in the, in that worship service, I've been asked to give a devotional and I was standing in the pulpit of my church and. I heard, I literally heard this is where you belong. And I heard it loud enough in my spirit that I stopped. I thought somebody in the congregation was saying something to me and ask people afterwards, if anybody had heard anything but nobody had.

So that call on my life. This is where you belong. That's been with me since I was 13 years old. It's not always that mystical, you know, for other, for other people, it's a matter of having other people around you call out your gifts and see the anointing on your life when you might not see it in yourself.

I have a lot of male associates who did not believe he was called to preach when he first stopped, we're starting working here. And I just looked at him as like, okay, it's like shooting fish in a barrel. Of course you're called to preach. You're at nine and you've got leadership all over yourself and I'm just going to watch God do this work and you, while I speak prophetically over your life.

And that's exactly what happened. So, um, so, so, you know, for everybody, the call is different. That's how it happened in my life. But I would say this cause you, you mentioned, you know, there, there might be somebody listening to this podcast right now who's maybe older than 13, you know, you're you're in your thirties or your forties or fifties.

And you're saying, you know, I thought I heard that one day. It's too late for me now, or, or God's, you know, I've ruined myself for the call, all things. I said, all things I said after I walked away for more than a decade. And, um, and yet what I discovered was it, once God has called you, he has called you, the call is not usually - you know, God is good for his word.

His yes is yes. And, um, so for me, even though, I mean, Long walk on the wild side. And when I came back, it was just like, God was drumming his fingers waiting for me to say yes for him, all that stuff that happened in my life when I kind of walked

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across the railroad tracks and into the darkness for God, that wasn't the point, the point was I was called and I come home to him.

So now live out your call. And I would say that, you know, for, for women right now, who, who may have lived in a season of life or living in a chapter in the world's history when female leadership wasn't quite as well accepted and so you just never took it on now's your time. Um, the world is more ready than it's ever been for women in leadership.

Greg: So there may be some women that are listening to this right now going oh, Um, and, and so, so seriously, Carolyn, like, um, this is out of my ignorance. This is why I love learning from you and why I enjoyed our conversation so much. So let's say, you know, I'm a 28 year old woman. And I've been serving as a children's pastor in a local church.

And, you know, it's, it's fine, but, but maybe they're listening right now going, You know what I think my call is to something else. What, give them, just give them some wise tips. Okay. Here, do this. Give the woman some wise tips and then give me the male leader who she's going to go tell this call to some wise tips.

Carolyn: Okay. So, um, I don't, I don't know that wisdom, uh, is what I can give you, but I can give you experience about that. And let's just hope that it just hope that maybe it's prophetic. But, um, I would say for women, um, you know, when, when it was, when it was my turn, um, I remember. I remember seeing my first female pastor, the first time I saw somebody in the flesh and I was mesmerized by her and it brought the whole call kind of flooding back into my life.

I was actually working very peacefully in public relations and had no intention of moving back toward the call, but I saw her and I couldn't get it out of my mind. And, and, um, and, and she was the first person who told me if you're called, you're called. God doesn't revoke the call. And, uh, it got under my skin and I couldn't get away from it.

So I would say to a woman who may be contemplating a revisiting of that call is you just listen to what the holy spirit is saying to you. You have to lay it out on the altar and say, Lord, is this, is this still for me? Was it bad Mexican food or was this really a call? And if it's really a call, then Lord, I will, I will lay my life, I will lay my yes, out there. That's it. I won't figure out the details. I won't figure out how this is going to work with my children. How this going to work? My husband, I was going to work

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where we live or the church I serve right now. I will leave all of that to you. I just let my yes lay out there.

That's it. Because it starts with a yes. God will not be able to work all the details out for you and make it all fit together, logically, until you say yes. And it might never work out logically, but it'll work once you say he has.

Greg: And okay. It's not, that's, that's pure wisdom. That, that was just, we just spoke into my life on an issue that you know, that we've been wrestling through and going.

Yeah, my job is just to say yes to the call. Right. I don't have to figure everything out. Okay. Now, but put me I'm I'm now let's say the senior pastor will just say of this church where this, this female has just received the call and you're going to come talk to me, help me, um, as a male leader. Um, and let's just assume here, um, let's assume that we do have openness to using that gifting.

Um, give me some wise counsel. On how to respond to this.

Carolyn: Okay, I'm going to come from the, I'm going to come from the negative side first. So hang with me a minute. Okay. Because I want to give a word of caution or, uh, um, first here's what often happens in traditions where everyone is, is open to women in leadership, we become so enthusiastic about the idea of getting a woman in leadership that we find the first woman who's willing, and we stick her in a spot, um, with, without exploring her.

And then you're hanging somebody out there to dry who may not be prepared, may not be called even, um, and may not be healed enough, maybe called may actually even be prepared or gifted, but not, not healed enough to, to handle leadership without getting squashed by it. So I would say first to, uh, to a pastor or to the friends or family around this woman who says, you know, I'm, I'm, I'm feeling a tug toward this, um, treat them with integrity, like an adult and walk them through a process. Don't just grab the first person who's willing. So you can say you've got. That's not fair to women, first of all. And it's certainly not fair to the folks with whom that that woman will work. Um, we, we wanna, we want to leave this, uh, we, we want women to make a winsome witness, which means that we need those who are called and not just equipped, not just talented, you know what I'm saying?

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And we do, we do that with all kinds of people. We do. Worship leaders, you know, got tons of talent, but are they called? You know, so it does, it's not, I'm not just talking about women.

Greg: Do they have the character to back it up?

Carolyn: Right. Exactly. Exactly. Um, and, and a woman who enters, you know, uh, mid-life may have things to work through before they come to the place where they're ready for leadership.

So that's my word of warning or caution, I guess, first, but, so, so, so now. What about the woman who walks into your office or, or husband walks into your living room and says, I just felt a call to ministry. Um, and my case that was sort of easy. My husband just immediately said, when do we go? I mean, that was his immediate response. He's a crazy man. What are you talking about? I'm not going anywhere. I'll do it. As long as I don't have to move, go to school, change my life and any way, add a four year old child at the time. I'm not changing anything. Oh, it looks silly to me. Um, but, but, so I think the question then is just to begin with prayer, um, to the first step would be let's enter into a season of prayer to discern what God is calling you to, because just, I noticed this a lot of times we impose our call on the things we've seen, God may be calling you to something you've never even seen before. And that can only be exposed through prayer. So start with prayer, give it a season. Don't be in a rush.

God is not in a rush. He does not need you yesterday so he can win the world today. He is not in a rush. What he wants is people who were in it for the long haul. Yeah.

Greg: That's good stuff. Okay. Now I'm going to make it just a little bit harder. Now you're a woman who's called you're coming to me as your pastor.

Good pastor theologically grounded. And they have landed theologically in, into a complementarian position rather than a egalitarian. So they, you know, women can serve as children's pastors worship leaders so forth, but women can't be senior pastors. What do you speak to are women out there who may find themselves in that situation?

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Carolyn: I would say, start with, um, God, if God has called you, um, it isn't, you need to be so clear on that call that you're not jumping on a bandwagon or going to war in areas that you've not been called. Um, so, so has God called you to change your church in this area? Or has God said to you personally, I've called you to ministry and you need to go where you can be effective and fruitful? I, it seems to me that too often, what happens is we, we, we lose our, our, our ability to be as creative as God is as about the call. We want it to work in our context where we are right now, without anybody having to move or anything, having to change. And we want, we want everybody around us to change their thinking so we don't have to move. But that's not usually the way God works. The way God usually works is no, no, I didn't call *them*. I didn't call them to change. I'm calling you to, to, to go where I send you. So sort of like, you know, Abraham, you leave Lot in his field. You go over the horizon. Yeah.

Greg: So you are a church planter and you bet, you know, again, one of the things we have in common and I love this, so, and you've been learning just tons in your church planting, but you shared something with me in our conversation about one of the dangers of women senior pastors that I want to unpack with you a little bit. And that's, I think you used the term of becoming the great mother. Is that, is that the terminology you use today?

Carolyn: It's a Jungian phrase actually. So it comes out of, comes out of, uh, philosophy/psychology and, um, and it's, it's a, it's a danger of among many that women face.

Let me just preface that by saying I get it. I totally get it that men have their own unique set of set of challenges as leaders in a church and in a community that's got men and women in it, and those are men's challenges. And I don't, I don't in any way diminish those challenges, but these are the challenges women face.

And these challenges have in many cases been under processed because there's just not as many of us. So for women, one of the challenges is that when you come into a church and you've, um, you know, you, you bring perhaps a more nurturing style of leadership and a more team-based style of leadership, all of a sudden, you find people coming to you who missed it from their own mother and want it from you.

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And if you're struggling to build a congregation or to find your footing in other areas of leadership, it can be very easy to do to just default to that place of strength and begin nurturing people. And, uh, Carey Nieuwhof actually has an, uh, an article on this. Several years old, but it just struck me as extremely relevant for women that pastoral care can actually kill a ministry.

But if you, if you take on all the pastoral care for yourself, being the great mother for all the men and women in your church and the children too, and then everybody else and all their family members. And, um, because that's a gift that you feel comfortable, a comfort zone for you. Then then you can end up being the sole provider of pastoral care and your church and, and your church will be stifled by that.

Greg: Um, and that's, I know, I know you, you say that we, we all have our own struggles and so forth, and, but I would say certain male pastors would have that same danger. And then, you know, but, but maybe women would perceive be perceived, like you said, as, as more nurturing in many occasions.

So I was deeply appreciative of that word. But on the flip side, I want to come back to what you said you were talking about earlier about how you affirming someone's giftedness and calling. And you said you had a male associate who was struggling with his called a preaching. And I just, I thought it was profound.

You weren't playing the great mother there. Um, in fact it was kind of this other thing there, the, the warrior king kind of, Hey, um, no I'm affirming. Um, I, you know, I'm sending you out, I'm going to help equip. Um, how is it? Does it come natural for you to step into that role? Um, talk about that as a female.

Carolyn: Yeah. So there's been a ton of research done. This is a great question. I could talk about this, just this little piece all day long, because there's been a ton of research. Not inside the church, but beyond the church in business and education and psychology as well, about how others perceive female leadership, um, on if you are it's called the it's called the double bind is one of the double binds that we sit in.

And so on one side, if you're too assertive or if you're the warrior king as a female leader, um, you come across as not likable. If you're too passive, you come across

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as not respecting. And so there's this weird line we have to walk to try, um, you know, you know, for people, but at the end of the day, I'll tell you this.

At the end of the day, we have to settle where Paul settles. When he says in Ephesians six, after you've done everything you can do, stand. Now I am an assertive personality and that's just how I, that's how I lead. That's how I live. Um, and so, so there are going to be people who are put off by that. I've got to learn to walk in my authority to do so humbly and to stand where God has placed me.

This is the, these are the gifts God's given me. If you are a more nurturing or a more, or a more passive personality or introvert. You've got to stand where God put you and learn how to make the most of those gifts and be fruitful in this space where God's called you to be. So I have a very strong-willed associate pastor who's, who was, he came in here seven years ago and he was very clear that he was not going to be a pastor and he was going to do youth ministry with us and he'd do it for one year.

That was his whole thing. And I remember sitting in this very room with him saying, Okay, well see that she's got leadership dripping out of every pore. You're a great preacher already. I know God's called you to sip on this. Wait it out. And, uh, this, this, this may he graduates from seminary and he's going to be an awesome, awesome - he is already an awesome, awesome pastor, a great partner in ministry, and it's been a real joy to be able to walk him and journey with him on this path. Yeah.

Greg: So Carolyn you have, you have a book coming out, uh, tell us when it's coming out. What's the title?

Carolyn: Thank you for asking this book will come out in September and I'm so excited about it.

It came out of, I want to just back up and say just a quick word that, um, you know, for all those years, when I was struggling to really accept my own place as a female pastor, I just struggled with that can figure out why I felt so crazy in that role. And, and that led me to do a, a doctoral program, uh, in, in church planting, um, out of Asbury seminary where I studied how women lead and out of that dissertation, I have kind of pulled that together, added a lot more to it.

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And the book, uh, the book that's coming out is called *When Women Lead* and the subtitle is *Embrace Your Authority, Move Beyond Barriers and Find Joy in Leading Others*. And for me, this book is like, just as my chance to sort of pull together everything that brought me peace and the role of leadership as a female.

And we don't spend a ton of time, uh, doing the, you know, the theological work. We do a little bit in the beginning and the theological work of whether or not women can lead, but that's not really the point. The point of this book is okay, so you're leading, here's your handbook. You need to know what barriers you're, you're up against, and then you need to know how to lead past those barriers.

So you can be successful in ministry because God isn't in this to burn you out. He's not in this to burn you out. He wants to see you succeed. The church wants to see you succeed. The people around you want to see you succeed. And, and in a vocation that has far too much burnout, you know, far too high of an attrition rate, the Lord wants to see people in it for the long haul. That's what this book is designed for, to help women discover how to be in it for the long haul.

Greg: Okay. And I love that. You also said though, I should read it. So as a male, as a male leader, why should I read that?

Carolyn: Just because you need it. They're things that I'll say in there, what it's like when, um, when you, as a pastor are, are shepherding a woman who has a call, what's it like when you, if you, as a pastor are working with women on your leadership team, what is it like for them? You're going to understand so much better how to work with women when you read the statistics, when you understand the psychology beneath this. Cause all of them, a lot of this is psychology, you know, Genesis one and two made us partners, Genesis three, made it a hierarchy. And ever since we've been working with this fallen tendency to prefer one kind of leadership over another. So how can you lead beyond that as a man and partner? With your entire team.

How can you as a church planting coach, coach women better, um, how can you as a husband or a mom better support the woman in your life who is called to ministry? So, yeah, it's forever.

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Greg: Okay, so that comes out in September. And, um, uh, man, I, you know, when we were talking in private, you, you shared with me a lot of the words and wisdom from your book and we just, uh, we could do a, a podcast on every chapter, but, um, so we're gonna jump back in at the launch of your book, have another podcast to talk about some of the content in the book, which is absolutely amazing.

Um, but Carolyn, it's such a deep joy to have you on the church planting podcast. Thank you so much for all. You're doing, not just for women in leadership, but for men like me.

Carolyn: It's just such a privilege. I'm so grateful for stadia and everything that you guys are about. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for giving me a little time and, uh, for letting me talk about stuff I love.