

# THE CHURCH PLANTING PODCAST

with Greg Nettle



**Greg:** Hey friends. I'm Greg Nettle and I serve as the president of Stadia Church Planting. And our desire is to help you start thriving, growing, multiplying churches for the next generation. We need to be helping you start thousands of churches per year. I love The Church Planting podcast, and especially this episode, Carolyn Moore is our guest. She's been on once before, but her new book, when Women Lead. Just releasing. And so we're gonna be talking about that. Carolyn is the lead pastor of Mosaic Church. It's in Evans, Georgia. She's the author of multiple books, such as tons to say on how to empower women in leadership, how to move the ball forward in church planting. So let's jump right into this episode. So Carolyn Moore, welcome to the Church Planting Podcast.

**Carolyn:** It is a great privilege to be with you. Thanks so much for having me. .

**Greg:** Yeah. So Carolyn, your brand new book, we said on our last podcast you were on, I wanted to get you on again when this book was being released. And so here you are when women lead. So talk to us about why this book.

**Carolyn:** So, you know, when I I, I've planted a church 19 years ago. I've been in pastoral ministry for 24 years. 19 years ago, it, it was, there just weren't, That's there, There really still aren't that many women, female church planners. But 19 years ago, it was particularly hard to find somebody who looked like me. I had really great male colleagues who were helpful, who coached me along the way and mentored me really great colleagues and friends. But what I would notice is, , they would do the things that would, and their, they would do things and their churches would just, you know, would respond beautifully. And their churches were growing at a really, a, a, a pace that you would want your church to grow at. When I would do those exact same things, my church just wouldn't respond in the same way. We just didn't have the same momentum that my male colleagues churches seem to have. And, and I would look at it and think, well, okay, so. There, there are some factors that work here. I'm, I'm, I might not be the same kind of leader. I might not have the same giftings. Certainly there's the Lord is doing what the Lord will do in every single situation. All of those things matter and need to be taken into account. But one piece that just seemed to me like a factor that, that nobody wanted to say out loud was just, I'm a female church planner, , and as a female church planner , things look different for me. I have different challenges and and the challenges that I have probably need to be acknowledged. But whenever I would say that out loud to people, you know, maybe part of this, maybe not all of it, but at least part of it is the fact that I'm a female leading this, this, this project, I would hear over and over again. No, it's not you, it's not that at all. You're doing great. And that could be crazy making for me. You would think that people saying you're doing great, that that would be, you know, a great encouragement, but it had the opposite effect on me because if it's not my gender, well then what is it? You know, if it's, if, if gender plays no part in the process, then you know, I'm even, I'm an, I'm an even worse leader than I think and even worse church planner than I. So I got so, so interested in this idea of what, what is it is, is it true or not that women face unique challenges when they plant? And, and if so, what are those challenges? And if there are challenges and we can name those challenges, then how do we, how do we help a, a woman to lead past those barriers so they can plant effectively and. I ended up calling all over the country. I met a woman in the calling just trying to find other female church planners like me. And I met a woman named Mary Kate Morris. She's a professor at Fuller Seminary, but she had planted two four square congregations before she became a professor. And she, she and I had. Great conversation one day where she validated so much of what I had been feeling and, and, and when I asked her that question. So, so do women have unique challenges, which is not to say that men don't have challenges, Of course, men have challenges. Everybody has challenges when you're church planning is not for wimps. Let me get an name. Men, right from the. Congregation on that one. So, so it's not to say that men don't have challenges, but women's challenges may be different or unique. And how do we identify those so that we can help women move past them and plant successfully? And, and Mary Kate said that yes,

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absolutely. Women have unique challenges and that sounds like a good doctor of Ministry project to me. And I was like, Oh, well that's for somebody else. That's not for me because I'm not going back to school and you know, God knows my gpa. We don't need to go through that again. , but I, I couldn't get away from it. It was, it became its own sort of either obsession or call. I don't know, which, I wanna think it was a call. So I did the doctoral work. I, I, I went deep. I, I interviewed hundreds of women who plant church, who, who have planted churches or have been part of a church planning experi. and I, I, I, I interviewed them at the surveys of hundreds of women. I, I actually face to face, interviewed dozens. And then, and then I took that data and I kind of boiled it down and I discovered there are some common challenges that women face that are unique. Two women and that there, and there are some, there are some ways, there are some strategies we can help women develop that will help them to lead past those barriers. And and then after I finished with the dissertation, there was just, it was just a book staring me in the face. It was, Like, Come on, you. This, this is, this needs to do more than just sit on a library shelf in one seminary and be read only by other doctoral students. It needs to be out there. So it took me a couple of more years to get it into the hands of a publisher, but now we are finally at the place where it's ready to be released to the world. And my hope is that it would be read by both men and women because. We want women who are, who are, and it's not. This is, the book itself is not just for women planters, it's for women who lead, women who lead in churches, women who lead in other spiritual settings, women who lead in nonprofits. It's for women who lead. And and I come at it as a follower of Jesus. But it, but there is a ton of data in there for and, and, and most. Research comes out of the, the psychological world, the educational world, the business world, because that's where the, that's where the studies have been done. So so yeah, so that's how it all happened.

**Greg:** Okay. So I, for one, am glad that you didn't leave it sitting on a shelf as a dissertation, but you're actually publishing the book. I, I'm very excited about it. But Carolyn, I mean, you, there are unique challenge, unique barriers that you discovered and you talk about five of the barriers in your book. There's one that I think is, you know, the elephant in the room. Just to start off. It's the theological barrier. Talk a little bit about that because I mean, that's definitely out there.

**Carolyn:** Yeah. So I think specifically for women who plant, this is an important barrier to acknowledge. We all, we all know it exists, right? We all know that there, there are people in the world who think women can lead in, in in ministry. And people who don't believe women should be leading in ministry except with other women or children. . But, but, but when we begin to break that down and, and look at the numbers, we, we really do begin to understand the depth of that. The depth that that challenge in difference of a, of belief can, can bring to bear on a project that's led by a woman. Because literally half the Christian world does not believe that women should lead in ministry. If you, if you add together all of the Southern Baptists in the world, all of the Roman Catholics in the world, and then, and then throw in for good measure. All of the reformed and near reformed movements that, that conservative movements that don't have a place for women in ministry leadership. That's more than half actually of the Christian world globally. . So that means that as a church planner or, or even as, just as a pastor, I am, I am fishing from half the pond that my male friends, I'm fishing from half the pond for for, for partners who are, who will help me to plant, who will, who will build that, that team that, that, that planting team or that launch team with me. I'm, I. Fishing from half the pond when it comes to finding leaders who are willing to kind of kind of chair, be part of the, the board or the council or whatever you have your, your structure calls for. And just in terms of finding people who are. Just in general ready to, to help co-lead in any ministry in the church. I'm fishing from half the pond and, and, and there's, there's just, there's just, Yeah, go ahead.

**Greg:** No, I just, I, I, I agree with you and, you know, so. And I certainly sympathize with those who and understand those who are theologically in a different camp from full empowerment of women. I, I,

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I understand that. I would just incur, encourage all of our listeners, please do the theological work. To make sure you land at your own theological conclusion rather than just being accepting and saying, Well, this is how I grew up and so forth. Because when, when I started this whole journey, Carol, and you and I have talked about this I was senior pastor of Ry Christian Church where I'd been there, you know, quite a long time. And the elders were all men and senior pastors and senior leadership, all male. And we did a seven year theological study on this. And everyone on the ownership, including myself at the end of that seven year study said we are now going to be gift based and not gender based. Right? And so for us it was, it was a, it was a surprise that we got there, Carolyn, but it was one of the best studies we ever did, one of the most fruit producing. And I'm so glad that we took the time to do it. And so I think we have to say that right at the top is. Please everyone do the theological work. You may not land where I landed or where river tree landed or where Carolyn has landed, but at least do the work yourself and take an honest look at this because it, it does put up barriers for women in leadership like you, Carolyn, and all of our other church planters and stadia plants, lots and lots of churches with female church planters. I wanna go into this pastoral care barrier because I think this is men and women, but it's more dangerous for women. Could you unpack that a little? .

**Carolyn:** Yeah. So here's Scott. There's just so much in there, you know, because when, when, when we find ourselves as women with, with, you know, you've got, you've got people coming after you asking you to defend yourself theologically, and then there's the, the unspoken perceptions that people have of what a leader looks like. You know, I just don't look like what you're, you know, I don't look like what a leader looks like. And you get. Pressure against you, and you're just looking for a win, right? Eventually, I'm just looking for a place where I can lead and, and, and do something and do it well, and people are appreciated. And so for many women, I don't wanna stereotype, all those stereotypes do exist for a reason, but many women have a more nurturing style of leadership and that nurturing. Style kind of feeds into good pastoral care. So when I, when I don't know what else to do with myself, I can just love on people, I can love on 'em, and I can be there at every surgery, at every, every personal crisis. I can pray with people, I can visit from house to house, all great things. But Carrie New H is written as for, for, for me. What was. Really a game changing article on how pastoral care can kill churches, and the reason is, that pastoral care beco pastoral care becomes if you, if that becomes your defaults mechanism for talking to to any people you meet I mean everybody in your congregation caring for every single person individually, you're never gonna be able to grow your congregation. Beyond the number of people you personally can care for. What I wanna say is that's just not a sustainable system, right? So if it's not a sustainable system, we're gonna have to actually step back from that gift as, as ministry leaders allow others to exercise that pastoral care or nurturing gift. So we can build a system that that is expandable and can sustain a larger.

**Greg:** Yeah. And, and I think if I remember you actually call it the, you, it's easy for you to become the great mother of the church. Right? That, that's all of a sudden that's how you are viewed. Now, and, and I've watched that with men. And listen, I'm pastoral care is important. We all know that. I, I was at a funeral, you know, yesterday afternoon later for a friend's mother, and it was pure pastoral care. But I, you know, and we do that right? But that's not what I spend the majority of my time doing. And I actually have to work harder at caregiving because I don't have a lot of mercy gifts, but I think a lot of women are actually, it's almost like we expect you to be our caregiver. Right. And that can be a real detriment. Yeah. Okay. So Let's talk. You've got one barrier. I, I don't wanna spend a lot of time on this, Carolyn, but I think, I think it's, I wanna give a teaser for the book for women and it's, it's the very real thing. No one likes to talk about the biological barrier. Yeah. And cuz this has perceptions from men as well.

**Carolyn:** Yeah, so on the, the biological barrier kind of hits us at both ends. Women just physically go through more marked seasons of life than men, and it isn't that we don't both go through seasons of

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life and have both both biological and emotional reactions to seasons of life. But women do have. Really obvious ones, like we're the, we are the ones who bear the children. And so pregnancy and, and the, and everything that surrounds pregnancy and caring for small children, that, that's a season of life that women simply have to acknowledge you. I say to women all the time, You, you can't have it all. You just can't have it all at once. And not, not not in care. Well, for the human beings who you've invited into your life. And so so you, you know, we have to, we have. Understand kind of what our limits are. Some people just have greater capacity than other people in terms of living out their call and also caring well for their own families, caring responsibly for their own families. And then at the other end of the spectrum is, is midlife and moving into menopause even. And, and the, the, the kinds of challenges that even, even. Emotional kind of mental health challenges that women face at that season of their life. Your children are out of your house, you're dealing with an empty nest. Your husband may be retiring. Your just your life changes and at the same time women chemically are changing again, and so just understanding that, that those, those stages of life present great opportunity for women. They're great gifts that. Are given to us, but they need to be we, we have to learn how to approach those seasons of our lives with maturity and eyes wide open, not naively, so that we can care for ourselves well and really acknowledge what our own personal, not just limits, but our own personal desires are for these seasons of our lives and, and not be pressed into molds that just don't fit us. I remember talking to a woman who. she had, she was in seminary. She wasn't yet ordained. She was, she was on her way toward ordination. Her husband was a pastor also. She had a, she had a child and she was pregnant with a child. And the denominational official, in order to check the female church plant box, appointed her to plant a new congregation. And that just seemed to me when I heard that story. And of course she, she did it because she committed to that, but that just seemed like. Inhumane thing possible to do to another person. And she would say it was, she, she was looking at this person and saying, Well, what are you doing to me and what are you doing to our family? And they were like, What? You know what? You signed up for this. This is what you got. We need to think compassionately toward ourselves as well as toward the people we are helping to find ministry positions for. So that. Take people beyond what God has called them to do. Just because you can doesn't mean you should.

**Greg:** Okay? So that chapter is just so helpful to men and women. Women to help you kind of be more aware, but men to help us understand some of the benefits and ways to lead and ways to come alongside and empower women in these seasons of life. So that's just such an important chapter for everyone to read. So, you started off with these barriers. Really that's the first half of the book, which is really enlighten. But the whole second half of the book then moves to empowering women and the first part of it's is just fascinating to me. You start off with about identity and why identity is so important. It can talk to us about that.

**Carolyn:** I appreciate very much just, just noting that the book is, it is almost exactly in half. Half is the challenges and the other half is the strategies. So you're gonna have to slog through some challenges in the first half of the book before you get to the answers. But the challenges really kind of set us up so that we understand why these strategies are are particularly important. To, to pay attention to. In the first half of the book, I talk about perception as a, as a challenge. The way people see leadership, perceive leadership, and then, and then how that then causes us to see ourselves as leaders. As I said earlier, if, if you spend enough of your life kind of. Having people press against your leadership or challenging your leadership, either theologically or just because we don't look like what somebody expects a leader to look like, that eventually has an effect on me personally. I be I, on my bad days, I can find myself doubting my call way too easily. And so one of the, one of the best ways that I can think of to come back against that self doubt is to really get back to something that's basic for men and women, both. And that is to know who you are in Christ when you know. Who you are in Jesus, you're better able, as Paul said in Ephesians six to stand when the, when the time comes, you know

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how to stand. And so I give a couple of exercises that you can work through in order just to begin that process of remembering who I am in Christ, understanding my identity as a human being before I. Think about really understanding better my identity as a person who is called into vocational ministry.

**Greg:** Yeah. So again, I'm just gonna kind of reiterate this. That's really important for women and as a foundation, but I found it very helpful as a man as well, who, you know, because I've gotta lead out of that same.

**Carolyn:** Right. And I, I wanna say, I, I, I just appreciate you bringing that up or, or emphasizing that several times this book is for men and women and and some of it is so that men can understand women better and really be better able to shepherd the women in their care who are called to vocational ministry in whatever setting, just call the lead in whatever setting they're called a lead. But, but there's, there are parts, like this chapter you're talking about identity or the next chapter, which is about authority, which. Which are kind of universal things. No matter who you are in ministry, you need to know who you are in Christ first. Otherwise you're just bringing your burning house into a room full of people. And that's not helpful. And an authority really is about a. Once I understand my call, once I really understand what it is God has called me to do, then I, my call is to take my place at the table without apology. So many women especially find themselves apologizing their way into the room or sitting at a table. You know, we all do it. We all do the imposter syndrome. You know, I, I don't belong here. Or as soon as they find out that I'm a fraud, what's gonna happen? That's everybody. Right? Yes. We need to learn how to take the authority, given us not the authority given us, not by virtue of our gifts or our talents, but the authority given to us. By the Holy Spirit himself, who has anointed us for ministry, has anointed us for the, for the work of, of welcoming and advancing the kingdom of God. And that's what all this is about. It's really not at the end of the day about men or women, either one. It's about the kingdom of God.

**Greg:** I, there's just so much to unpack here and we gotta wrap up. But I was, I am so thankful for this book, Carolyn, and your work, because yesterday morning, you know, it was Sunday morning and my wife and I, our daughter Tabitha, is 23 years old and she is now the worship leader at a church plant about an a little over an hour south of us. And so she invited us down to church tomorrow, the yesterday. And we went down and I watched my amazing follower of Jesus' daughter lead this congregation in and me personally in worship. And I was so proud of her. And the crazy thing is Carolyn, I, I was just sitting there thinking about the fact that in the church that I grew up in just this wonderful little church, but she wouldn't have been allowed to do that. She would've been allowed to play the piano. But she couldn't lead the teams. She couldn't lead worship from upfront. And so I'm, I'm just, so, I mean, I know that's personal, but it's just I love seeing women empowered to use their gifting in leadership. And so, Carolyn, as kind of as we wrap up here, what would you say to the women out there, the young Tabitha of the world? You know, just some, maybe some words of encouragement as they're listening to this?

**Carolyn:** Yeah. What I wanna say to you, Roman 16. That's, that's your home base in the scripture. Genesis one and two, and then Roman 16. Roman 16 is this great hall of women. You know, we talk about in Hebrews, there's the Hall of Faith. I would say Roman 16 is this great hall of women. I want you to go and just take encouragement as Paul names woman, after woman, after woman who he has co-labor in ministry with. And I want you to hear. What they were up against. You know that these were first century people who were being persecuted, who stood in the battle together, shoulder to shoulder with their male colleagues, and they together were all about the welcome in advance of the Kingdom of God. Take courage from the women who have been carrying this, you know, who have been carrying their cross from, from Mary forward and and learn how learn you. Paul tells us to grow

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up in every way. And to him, who is our head, do that work. Grow up in every way into this call God has given you so that you can be part of the welcome in advance of the Kingdom.

**Greg:** Carolyn Moore. Go out and pick up this book *When Women Lead*. It's available. It'll be a great read for everyone listening. A great read for you to study too with your leadership team. Carolyn, thank you so much for being on the church planning podcast.

**Carolyn:** Thank you.