

MINISTRY *Chick*

Find Your Community,
Own Your Leadership,
Take Your Step!



MELISSA MASHBURN

Copyright © 2022 by Melissa Mashburn

Published by Market Refined Publishing,
An Imprint of Market Refined Media, LLC
193 Cleo Circle
Ringgold GA 30736
marketrefinedmedia.com

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher or author, except for brief quotations in printed reviews.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked (MSG) are taken from The Message. Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers.

Cover and Interior Design by Nelly Murariu at PixBeeDesigns.com
Manuscript Edits by Carolyn Reed Master and Market Refined Media

Print ISBN: 979-8-9855797-9-6

Digital ISBN: 979-8-9868023-0-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022915399

First Edition: September 2022

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>Foreword by Kadi Cole</i>	ix
<i>Introduction: Welcome to Ministry Chick!</i>	xi

SECTION ONE

You Are More Than Just: What I Wish I Knew When I Started in the Ministry 1

You Are More Than Just: The Title You Have	3
You Are More Than Just: The Skills You Bring to the Ministry	21
You Are More Than Just: The Only Female at the Table— Being the Token Female	41
You Are More Than Just: The Person You Are Married to— Being Married and in the Ministry	75
You Are More Than Just: The People You Are Raising— Being a Mom in Ministry	107

SECTION TWO

You Were Made for More: How to Move Forward in Your Leadership Development 127

You Were Made for More: It's Time to Find Your Community	129
You Were Made for More: Own Your Leadership	165
You Were Made for More: Take Your Step	183
You Were Made for More: Where Do You Go From Here?	203

<i>Group Leader Guide</i>	213
<i>Group Discussion Questions</i>	217
<i>Real Ministry Chick Experience Contributors</i>	223
<i>Chick Chat Contributors</i>	226
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	227
<i>About Ministry Chick, the Facebook Community</i>	231
<i>About the Author</i>	232
<i>Endnotes</i>	235

Preface

Hello, Friend,

If you picked up this book, then I am hoping you realize you are not alone in your journey as a female leader in the ministry. I'm also praying that by the time you finish this adventure with me you will realize that you are more than just . . . whatever you used to want to say next about yourself. But more than anything, it's my prayer that you are picking up this book because you are a female leader in the ministry, and you are ready to move beyond the titles, hats, and other things that are put on you by your boss and even others in the ministry, so you can be the very best leader you can be as you faithfully serve.

I get it, though, because I've been labeled a pastor's wife, pastor, ministry leader, ministry director, super volunteer, and so many other strange and ambiguous things in between. Yet, whatever your role is at the church, you are way more than what you do in the ministry. Over the last twenty years I've served in the local church in just about every role except for student ministry. That was only out of respect for my own kids at the time, because my husband Matt and I really felt like they needed their own place to be that their parents were not immediately involved in or leading.

It's my goal throughout the course of this book to walk alongside you as you find your community, own your leadership, and take your next step to wherever God might be leading you. I know, boy do I know, that it can be and

might be scary, but if there is one thing that I know now more than ever it's this . . . the Church needs you. We need your gifts, your skills, your leadership, and your voice in the ministry now more than ever. With over 60% of those attending our churches being women, they need to see strong, confident, Jesus-loving women in the ministry who are using their gifts for the Kingdom. They need to see it and so does the next generation of women in the Church.

We need strong female leaders that have walked the road and can share their journey with others. I wish I had this information in my hands when I first started out in ministry. I was so passionate and on fire for God and willing to do whatever it takes for the local church. I had fire in my belly, but it was an all-consuming fire at times that accidentally burned a few people, even myself.

We need that passion and excitement, but we also need well trained, thoughtful, solid female leaders who are grounded in their faith and in their identity. This is not cockiness, but a holy confidence balanced with humility that is in the ready position for whatever God has in store next. This kind of self-awareness and readiness doesn't happen overnight, it happens over time with intentional and deliberate learning, training, and understanding. It takes hard work to get deep down in our hearts to make sure they are pure, clean, and focused wholly on God and His will.

When the motive of our heart is out of alignment with God's design, timing, or intent, we can put our own personal agenda on the center stage of our ministry efforts. There

is no room for self-promotion and manipulation in this role. Oh, I've been there, and unfortunately even done that for a season, and here's what it gets you—burned out, worn out, exhausted, and unfulfilled. There can be a seductive lure of celebrity that is flashy and can feel like you've made it, but do not be deceived, God deserves all the honor and glory and if you start to focus on you, more than you do Him, then you are headed for a heap of trouble.

We're going to walk through a lot of stories and real-life ministry experiences together in this book and it's my prayer that at the end of our time together you will realize that you are more than just the title you have or the role you fulfill; you are a beautiful, wonderful child of God and He has uniquely prepared you to serve Him in mighty ways. But that service must be out of an overflow of your love for Him, not the first and foremost thing that you do or even who you are.

You are more than that.

You are His and He has called you to this season of your life and ministry.

It's a high calling and a great adventure, truly one that is better when He leads, and you have a few trusted friends to go on the journey with you. I pray that you find that camaraderie here within these pages and can't wait to hear all about what He is doing in and through you because of it.

Foreword *by Kadi Cole*

She was standing in the back of the conference room lingering but not getting in line, keeping loose eye contact but trying not to be attention-grabbing, pleasantly smiling but keeping a little quiet. I didn't know this woman, yet I knew I was just like her.

Maybe you're also a woman whose faith keeps you centered but who's leadership gifts are calling you to more? You can make an entrance, but rarely do. You have something to say, but often defer to others. You long to make a difference but aren't sure how. If you ever find yourself caught between being not enough and yet too much, then you are one of us . . . those with potential, those who hunger, those who are trying yet aren't ever *really* sure of ourselves and our leadership.

It only took 30 seconds for my suspicions to be confirmed about Melissa . . . she's hardly a stand-in-the-background kind of gal. When the line in front of me finally subsided, she slowly made her way forward and introduced herself. *Of course . . . you're Melissa!* We had already met online because she is that kind of leader—warm, connected, energetic, engaging, and caring. We had built a loose connection through the Ministry Chick Facebook Group (which you should absolutely join right now. It's okay, stop and take a minute to sign up. We'll wait.) And now God was doing something new in and for both of us. I could *feel* it.

That's what Melissa does. She connects with people, bringing all her joy and wisdom and seasoned leadership,

and then she helps build something new. I was a new author at the time, with a surprise best seller trying to say yes to the opportunities coming at me that put me in front of large groups of male pastors and leaders. And at the same time, I was equally longing to help female church leaders know they are not alone, get the encouragement they are often missing, and accelerate their ability to build a professional network of their own to equip them in their calling. It was no small task, and I was feeling under-equipped and overwhelmed. Then God sent Melissa. She stepped into Ministry Chick to bring leadership, relationship, and a good dose of fun. She transformed our fledgling social media group into a tribe of nearly three thousand female ministry leaders who are constantly helping and supporting each other as we all answer the call of God in our lives.

What new thing is God calling you to? I know He has something, and I also know you aren't meant to build it alone. The great news is that God has also brought you exactly the right people. Melissa and the team of contributors to this book will both uplift your heart and blow your mind. Get ready. It's time to find your community, own your leadership, and take your next step. You can do it.

And I'll be cheering you on the entire way!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kadi". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a small flourish at the end.

Kadi Cole

Author of *Developing Female Leaders* and *Find Your Leadership Voice in 90 Days*

Founder of Ministry Chick and Kadi Cole & Company

www.kadicole.com

@kadicole

Introduction:

Welcome to Ministry Chick!

Welcome to ministry. Whether you are new to ministry or have been walking this road for a while, I am so glad you are joining the conversation. We need you to be the best possible version of yourself (as a leader and as a woman), and it is my prayer that this book will give you the tips, tricks, and tools you will need to do so.

Just to give you a little insight, this is probably the last thing I ever thought I would write. I literally sat down to write a book on the importance of godly friendships in your life, but after I started writing these words just started to pour out from my heart onto the pages. The hard part about that is if you knew me, really knew me, you would know that I wrestle with one big gaping messy question pretty much all the time and that question is, “Who do you think you are?” It’s a question that has literally plagued me since the fourth grade. I don’t think my teacher, whom I will not name publicly, meant any harm by her statement. But at the time, on a young impressionable heart, it negatively grafted itself deep down into my soul causing me to question myself daily.

In the years that followed, it unofficially became the question that came up pretty much any time I tried to go for a dream or big project. It needled me, poked at me, and caused me to doubt myself, my abilities, those who

loved me, and everything in between. This uncertainty and lack of confidence really held me captive for too many years. It took years of experience, maturity, and solid biblical Christian counseling to get to the other side of that question. I can see now that this one single question was the driver behind some of my perfectionism, workaholism, and years of feeling less than—one single question from what a fourth-grade teacher said as a reprimand to an overachieving, overactive, and excited young girl.

The hard part of this overarching theme of trying to earn everyone's approval, which was this great big revelation in my life, was that it came upon me in the middle of over a decade of ministry. It came crashing in on me while I had worked at two thriving churches that were at the time growing and looked good on the outside and yet they were also deeply unhealthy internally. As a growing church that was wrestling with the demands of the growth, the busyness and unrealistic expectations started to catch up to not only my heart but my body as well. I didn't know it and did not even appreciate what was going on inside or around me, but it became a driver to push myself more, and work harder to be . . . well . . . the best. I was going to be the hardest working, the most informed, have the greatest number of volunteers, you name it. I wanted to be (and wanted the ministries that I led to be) the example for others. Yeah, I know, you hear the downfall coming, don't you? The ugly part is that all of that was based off *me* and *my* gifts, and *my* skills, and *my* abilities. You heard me correctly, I was neck deep in the ministry and yet relying on myself and my skills and not leaning on God. I don't

say this lightly, nor is it something that I am proud of, but it is my hope that maybe this helps you along the way as you lead in the ministry.

This book in your hands is twenty years in the making. It's everything I wish I had known when I first started out in ministry as well as everything, I wish I had known about who God is, who He created me to be, and how we can and should work together and lean on each other to accomplish His will on earth. My story is one full of lessons learned the hard way and it's my hope that in by sharing some of what I have learned along the way that you will be able to short cut, skip over, or even shorten the learning curve for you because, my friend, there is a learning curve to this thing called life, especially life in the ministry as a female leader.

I know that this book will not be exhaustive and cover everything you have questions about, but it's my hope that it will cover some of the major themes that you might encounter as a female leader in ministry. It's the culmination of decades of work with women as a ministry leader, pastor, friend, coach, mentor and everything in between. I hope by the end of our time together you walk away with this—a clear understanding of who you are in Christ and how you can find your community, own your leadership, and take your next step.

Whatever that step might be, I know there might be a little voice inside of your head (like there was in mine) that is right now saying, "Who do you think you are?" We are going to squash that question with the truth of who God

says you are by digging into Scripture, seeking wisdom (James 1:5) allowing His Word to define our identity and not leaning on our understanding (Proverbs 3:5) but fully leaning into who He says you are as His daughter and His leader in the Church—His voice to a lost and lonely world.

Who does He say you are, my friend?

You are loved (1 John 4:10-12),

You are His (Deuteronomy 7:6),

You have gifts and skills (1 Corinthians 12:1-11),

He needs and wants you to use them for the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7),

He will not leave you (John 14:16),

He will not forsake you (Hebrews 13:5),

He has called you (Ephesians 1:18),

He has given you a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7),

He has qualified you (2 Corinthians 3:4-6),

He has equipped you (2 Timothy 3:17),

He has prepared you (Romans 9:23),

You are ready to get to work, because you are more than just . . . the labels that others put on you or you even put on yourself.

Here's how I know this—I've lived it and carried it around for most of my life, burdened by the weight of everyone else's expectations of me and for me. Yes, even as

a Christ follower, and yes, even as a female leader in the ministry. The reality is that we are human. When Christ enters our hearts, our eternities are changed, but we still have work to do on our “stuff”. Thankfully through lots of growth, counseling, prayer, and learning things the hard way by the grace of God I can see just how heavy that “not enough” burden has been on me as well as my ministry.

God can and does use anyone He chooses to do His work. He takes broken-down, every-day, ordinary people to do His extraordinary work, and it is truly magnificent to see.

Once we let go of everyone else’s expectations and labels, we can truly rest in the label He has given us as His child(ren). “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12, ESV).

It’s been a painful and bumpy journey at times, *but* God (I love those two words together, don’t you?) has done something miraculous in me that I hope to share with you so that you can find your community, own your leadership, and take your next step to wherever He is leading you—even right now as you read this!

Who do you think you are?

I’m so glad you asked . . . I am His and I am here to do His work.

Let’s get this party started, shall we?

Melissa

Section One

YOU ARE MORE THAN JUST _____

What I Wish I Knew
When I Started in the Ministry
as a Female Leader

Chapter 1

YOU ARE MORE THAN JUST: THE TITLE YOU HAVE



When I sit with female leaders, the first question that typically comes up is, “What do you do?” We’ve become so accustomed to identifying ourselves with what we do. What we do is a job; it’s not who we are. It’s a part of us, but it isn’t us. At least not completely. The same is true with your specific title in the ministry. Let’s face it. Every church has a very different position on what roles and titles women are permitted to have according to their denomination’s theology on gender. Some churches are complementarian, and some are egalitarian, while others are a messy mix of both. Regardless, many of us female leaders may not ever get certain titles like leader, shepherd, pastor, or minister. It doesn’t mean you aren’t those things; it simply means your church doesn’t acknowledge women holding those roles as titles.

I remember starting in my second ministry position. It was one of my favorites, but when I was interviewing for the position, the pastor gently mentioned to me that they do not believe that women can or should be called

or have the title of “pastor”. Well, that was very unexpected. It was something that I had worked hard for at my previous church, and it took years of hard work to be licensed in a ceremony in front of my peers as a pastor at that church (in the same denomination as the one that I was moving to at the second church, by the way). I sat there feeling a little bewildered and shocked. This title was something that was a part of me, part of my calling, and part of what God had done in my life, but now this pastor said I had to give it up and be a “director” instead. Which, okay, isn’t the end of the world, but it was a hard pill to swallow at the time, because, after all, I had worked hard to earn that title, and this felt like a step back in some ways—even if it was mostly a shot to my ego. It just didn’t seem fair to me at that time. After a lot of prayer and discussion with my husband, friends, and even mentors, I decided that I could lay down that “title” because that’s what it was—a manmade title. I knew that I was still called to pastor/shepherd people, so I could and would do so without the title before my name.

Honestly, as hard as it was to process in the beginning, I was soon able to lay it down and be okay with it. In the meantime, God had started to really work on my heart and helped me see that my identity is not in the title that others give me, but my identity is in *Him* and the title *He* gives me. It was not an easy—nor was it a quick—process, but I can see now (got to love 20/20 hindsight) that I had become so consumed with the title that it was holding me back from just being me—Melissa.

What about you? Is there a title that you have that has become a badge of honor that you wear? I'm not saying that you don't deserve the praise, the accolades, or even the power of that title, but is it becoming an idol?

That's where the heart work comes in. Your title is child of God, not pastor, director, coordinator, associate, assistant, or what other title you have in your role as a female leader. What if, no matter what the title is, we simply worked as if it really didn't matter?

"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." (Colossians 3:23, ESV)

If we are leaders—and I am guessing that if you are reading this book, then you are a leader—the reality is that we all have influence; it's just a matter of what we are doing with it and whether we are being intentional about it. What if we poured out our heart and soul in every project simply because we've been given an opportunity to make a difference for the kingdom?

How do you even begin to do that? Great question! And I hear you. I get it. I literally worked my entire ministry career for this pinnacle moment only to have it taken away. Okay, so I willingly laid it down, but at the time it felt like it was taken away.

Therefore, it is so incredibly important that before you move on to anything else I have to share, that you make sure you are firmly rooted in your identity in Christ. I know

you might think you are solid here but take it from someone that has been around this block a few times, there are a lot of strong leaders in the ministry world who struggle with their identity in Christ. The world and all its trappings: notoriety, money, stuff, climbing the ladder in the organization, looking and living a "Pinterest perfect" life are all very tempting. They can lure the best of us to be focused on the "things of this world" and not even realize that we have drifted a little off course.

I think it's also a good time to take a moment to pause and discuss the whole idea of a job and a calling. Some of you might work at a job. You go in, work hard, do your best, and go home. You are a child of God, so of course you want to work as if working for the Lord, but your job may be completely different from your calling.

Practically speaking, a job is what you are paid to do and accomplish for your organization. Anyone can get a job. That is the nature of the world we live in. A calling, on the other hand, is something that God has given to you specifically as the purpose and passion of your life. A calling is what will carry you through when the demands of the "job" get to be too much at times. The calling God gives you is unique to you. It is the thing that you would do even if you did not get paid for it. It drives you. You live it, breathe it, think about it, pray about it, and have those "this is what I was made for" mountain top moments in fulfillment of a calling. You can be excited and feel proud of your work at a job, but it still might feel like it is missing something if your job doesn't engage your calling.

You can also have a job in which God has specifically called you to serve the people or the mission there. Okay, that may sound a little confusing, but here's the thing that I hope makes sense in its most basic form—God can and will use you wherever you are if you are willing to be used by Him—whether it is in your dream job, a regular “provides the paycheck” job, or working in the ministry.

For example, you might be employed at your church doing payroll, but you know that's not your calling (it can be, but for the sake of this example we will say it's not). Your calling is in hospitality and making sure people feel welcome. Because your job doesn't satisfy your calling, you may serve on the First Impressions team at your church on the weekend or by hosting a group of new believers in your home once a month.

What you do is not who you are; it is an expression of who you are. It's a part of you, but it does not define you. Your job is an element of your gifts that God uses of you in this world but if we are not careful, we can easily become distracted and so focused on getting the perfect job “at the church” that we can easily forget that we can all live out our calling every day—no matter what job or job title we have. And better yet, we can live it out even if we don't have the title we desire or deserve.

I've heard people say, “I am not a leader because I don't even have a title”, or “I am just a volunteer in the ministry” a lot lately. I would caution you from jumping into that “less than” mentality because you don't have a particular title or because you are a volunteer. We are all

called to serve the Kingdom and your role might look different than mine, but that does not make it any more or less important. We each have work to do, and we need every single one of us working to do what He has called us to do while we are here (1 Corinthians 12).

Chances are that you are doing way more than you even think. Don't minimize it because you think you need a title, a paycheck, or a leader to notice you to validate your unique service.

Real Ministry Chick Experience



from Crystal Stine

Colossians 3:23 in the Message says, "Do your best. Work from the heart for your real Master, for God, confident that you'll get paid in full when you come into your inheritance. Keep in mind always that the ultimate Master you're serving is Christ." That verse is one that changed my heart and challenged my idea of what it meant to be successful.

While other girls were dreaming of their weddings or their future husbands or the number of kids they would have, I was dreaming of my career. I desperately wanted an answer to "What do you want to do when you grow up?" and along the way I lost sight of the fact that I should have been trying to answer a better question: "Who do You want to be when you grow up, God?" My identity was firmly

rooted in my role, my title, my contributions, and my successes, so when I experienced failures and detours, my identity was shaken.

If I'm fully transparent, I'm really, really good at working. I love to work. Using my gifts and passions to serve an organization brings me joy. But for years I spent my time striving after the next promotion or opportunity for recognition—I was working the way the world expected, and instead of feeling fulfilled and accomplished, I was weary, frustrated, and empty. Something was missing because even when my jobs changed and I began working in ministry, I still felt lost.

That was the beginning of a journey with the Lord that led me to write books like *Holy Hustle* and *Quieting the Shout of Should*. As I unpacked privately what God was revealing—that my identity wasn't in Christ, that success and busyness had become idols, and that I lacked the humility to receive what He had next for me—He asked me to share parts of the journey publicly.

When we set aside our pride and commit to working well for the Lord, we can stop striving for fancy titles that tell the world we're worthy. God has already chosen you, to use your gifts and talents for His kingdom, right where you are. Your mission field is the field you stand in today, and you can shine the spotlight on God and proclaim the Gospel at home, in the grocery store, in the school drop-offline,

on social media, or in a formal ministry role, to an audience of one or thousands.

The number of hats you wear, the titles you hold, nor the extra work you desperately wish someone would acknowledge, will ever make you more valuable to the Lord. You are His, and He loves you. In Christ we find our true identity as beloved children of God. Work hard, rest well, and serve the Lord with confidence.

When I coach female leaders, one of the first things we talk about are core values. Why? Because you must have a firm idea of what's important to you to be able to filter through all the other things that are not as important. These core values will allow you to figure out if something is just "off" or doesn't feel right. They can help you as you have opportunities to come your way to see if they are in alignment with who you are and what is important to you. They can be guardrails in your ministry that serve as protective barriers to keep you safe, healthy, and on track in what your stated goals are, and the unique and specific purpose God has for your life.

*"When your values are clear to you,
making decisions becomes easier."* – Roy Disney¹

So why is it important to know what our core values are? It's important because if you can't identify them, you

will constantly be blown around by other people's opinions and values. When that happens there is a disconnect and a feeling deep down inside of us that something isn't right. We might not even be able to pinpoint directly why it isn't right, but we do know it rubs us the wrong way or maybe even grates on our nerves. Have you ever spent some time around someone and something about them just doesn't sit right with you? You can't always pinpoint what "it" is, but when you are in touch with your values, you can be sure that it's probably bumping up against your core values, which can cause an adverse reaction in your connection to them.

Here's an example of what I am talking about: imagine having a ministry friend whose whole platform was based on living authentically, only to notice how very often she posts selfies or a filtered view of her life. That would seem contradictory and would call the credibility of her value on the message of being "real" into question. Now imagine if you have a personal core value about authenticity! Hello! This person would be hard to follow or engage with because she not only violates her own stated value with implications of the contrary, but she rubs against your own core value.

It's up to you to guide the choices you make to define your values, but please remember that these are unique to you. Other people won't necessarily share your core values. This is why it is so important to determine the choices you make to define and defend your values. They are just as unique to you as the ministry God has given you.

The hard part is when you live outside of what you value, going where He didn't send you, working, living, and doing things that just do not line up with who Christ created you to be. When this happens, you can experience increased stress, anxiety, discontentment, and the blurring of boundaries you need in your life to keep you going where God is leading you. Everything you do in your life is about choices and they are made based on what you value. What we value is usually a reflection of what is truly important to us, so making sure you know what you value can help you to live a truly purposeful life. It also helps you filter through any jobs, opportunities, projects, or even people that come into your life. When you decide ahead of time what your core values are then you can be intentional about living your life and ministry the way God specifically created you.

When I sat with Kadi Cole, my mentor and coach, to work through what my core values were, I found there were three specific sections of those values: Some represent *my authentic self*, some crossed over to how I interact with *people*, and the last few focused on *who I choose to be*. While this break down might not be the case for everyone, I have found that it is a good idea to dig in and find out what your core values are. Here's some questions to answer to get started on discovering yours:

- » When you were a child (early elementary school age), what were 6-7 qualities that described you?
- » What are some things that you are passionate about doing?

- » Think of a time during the last 15 years when you felt you were living your best self. What are a few characteristic traits of yourself at that time?
- » If you were to write down a list of the top 10 values that people would need to have a successful life, what would you list?

Now, go back through all the above questions and think about what your top five values might be based on each of the responses. These are most likely your top five values.

Your core values can serve as a thermometer to gauge your inner health. If you are unhealthy, it will show up in your everyday life. I'm not talking about your height, weight, or anything outward; I'm talking about the things deep down in your heart (Proverbs 4:23). I know this because I went through it. I did not even realize how unhealthy I was until I was on the edge of burnout. You see, I never dug into my core values, nor my identity in Christ, when I first started leading in the ministry. I was fresh, young, inexperienced, and super passionate about making a difference in the local church. I was a sinner saved by grace as an adult and I knew how much He had radically changed my life. I was confident that God could and would use me.

What I didn't realize was that, yes, while I was a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and He had washed me clean (Psalm 51:7), I was still the old me in a lot of ways. This means I still carried junk with me even in my new role. I was working "for" the Church and in many ways that can exacerbate any underlying things we still need to work on.

For me, it turned into perfectionism and workaholism. The demands of ministry pushed on my “not good enough” buttons in ways that I wasn’t fully prepared to deal with, so I became driven to an unhealthy level. It wasn’t until a few years later that I even noticed it. Yes, people did try to point it out, but my immaturity in the faith and my lack of awareness of my core values allowed me to be swallowed up by the demands of ministry. This is why it is so incredibly important to know that you are more than the title you have or role you serve in this season of your life and leadership.

Understanding your core values along with having a strong identity in Christ will set you up for a long, healthy, productive season of ministry. We do not need here today, gone tomorrow women in ministry. We need female leaders that are here for the long haul, who live, breathe, and serve from a heart that loves God and wants to serve Him here on earth. We need that from you! Please do the heart work now so that you can be strong, confident, and ready to go wherever He sends you.

Real Ministry Chick Experience



from Jessie Cruickshank

These days I think of identity and calling as two sides of the same coin. I like to think that my calling flows out of my identity in Christ. I may have talents and skills, but they should not exist apart

from or outside of the space of redemption in my identity in Christ. When we are young, our identity is informed, in part, by our community. I always wanted to be teachable, and I think I leaned too much into other people's opinion and perception of me to help shape that identity—especially my identity and calling as a leader. I embraced any formative instruction they gave me, but eventually I started to feel lost and tossed about by the whims of others' agenda for my development.

Upon reflection, I realized that nobody had asked me who I thought I was created to be. They all had their own opinions of what my calling was. Nobody asked me what God was saying to me about it. I had become a chameleon rather than a leader with competencies and boundaries. I needed to get all the other voices and opinions out of my head so I could learn to hear my own voice. I needed a solid starting point of 'me' rather than always modifying and adapting it. This led to the advent of a season of being 'unteachable,' trusting God to later refine and shape what I discovered about myself.

It was a three-year journey learning to be comfortable in my own skin. I learned to be comfortable with my own voice, my own heart, my own hands (skills), and my own two feet (experience). It wasn't easy. It was hard to learn how much of my calling and identity formation I had outsourced to other people and their opinions or agendas. The good

news is that I have indeed learned to be comfortable in my own skin, with my own voice, heart, hands, and feet. I believe my leadership flows out from my identity in Christ, and the more those have come into alignment, the greater my impact has been, regardless of position or title.

I've invited some of my friends from the Facebook group called Ministry Chick to share some of their thoughts on this topic, and when you see it in the book it will be listed as Chick Chat. If you would like more information about the Ministry Chick Facebook community, please go to the back of the book for more info on connecting with us. I know you will be blessed and encouraged by their ideas.



Chick **CHAT**



Real, practical advice on being a female leader in the ministry and struggling to not let your title or role at the church define you as a person.

Be "all there," wherever you are. Doing your best at work and at home happens when you are fully present to God, yourself, and those around you.

– Rosemarie

Define God's purpose for your life by writing a purpose statement supported by a biblical reference. Then

keep it posted on your phone screen to be reminded regularly that the reason you do what you do is because of who God made you to be. – Jerra

*I wrote on my mirror who I am statements . . . I am a child of God, I am called by God, I am a . . . so I can remind myself daily I am more than my ministry role.
– Sara*

*Keep the Sabbath—make it a priority that is more important than any task my job requires. When I honor the Sabbath, I’m able to do more, I have a clear mind, and my week never feels overwhelming or unmanageable. I also have hobbies and friends outside of the Church. It’s also important for me to have a wide variety of information and things I’m reading so I never get stuck in just my perspective.
– Katylin*

*I have a plaque on my desk with Colossians 3:23-24 written on it. Some days I have to remind myself I work for God not man—WHATEVER I do—this includes serving or leading in areas I don’t normally work (it is hard). I also have a group for accountability.
– Susan*

I remind myself who I am beyond my title regularly. When you imagine yourself without your title it reminds you that you aren’t your title. I ask God at least yearly if this is where He wants me and then listen. Remember, your family only knows you as you,

MINISTRY CHICK

so be the person you want to be around them. Your kids don't care about your title, but they do care how you treat people. – Dianne

I remind myself often about who called me and empowers me. – Natalie

I remember that my role on staff is an expression of my calling but that my calling will go with me wherever I am placed. I guess for me it's knowing what I am called to and knowing that calling has the highest priority and lives itself out no matter where I work. – Heather

Know how to rest well and define what sabbath could look like in your context so you are less likely to develop a Messiah complex. – Evi

QUICK *Tips*

Here are some practical tips to help you avoid being defined by the title you have in the ministry:

- ✓ Determine your core values.
- ✓ Spend some time in prayer and seek God's response to who you are.
- ✓ Ask a few friends to pray with you as you seek to see yourself as God sees you.
- ✓ If you are struggling with this whole idea, then consider talking to a trusted friend or even a licensed Christian Counselor.
 - ✓ This has been a huge part of my health and healing over the years in ministry and I highly suggest having a counselor you can trust to help you work through some of the topics we will be addressing in the book.
- ✓ Consider investing in a Christian Life Coach, specifically someone with ministry experience, who can help guide you as you move forward.
 - ✓ A counselor will help you work on the stuff from your past that might be holding you back while a life coach will help you strategically move forward.



About the *Author*



Melissa has invested more than 20+ years serving the local church on various staff teams ranging in size from 90 to over 40,000 in weekend attendance. She currently serves at Southeast Christian Church which ministers to over 40,000 people weekly. Melissa has had various roles, including executive level leadership and an extensive background in communications, marketing, membership, groups, first impressions, weekend service development, children's ministry, and women's ministry.

Melissa runs the private Facebook group Ministry Chick (originally founded by Kadi Cole & Company) where she leads more than 3300 women from all over the world. In the Ministry Chick group, she hosts webinars, builds community, and provides the resources and connections for female leaders in the church.

Her specialty is working with women in ministry—at the local church, in nonprofits, and in personal ministries. She coaches female leaders to transform their thinking and renew their gifts, skills, and leadership. She offers individual coaching to women in ministry as well as consulting with churches and female leaders.

She and her husband, Matt, co-founded a company called The Mashburn's Consulting Group, where they offer

practical solutions for growth for churches and non-profits, but the training, insight, and information can be transferred to businesses as well. They love to work alongside churches, ministries, and leaders who want to grow either in attendance, giving, leadership abilities, volunteers, or finances, etc.

As a connector, she loves to put the people that God puts in her path together. She believes the connections we have are not just for our good but for the good of others, and when you place people together who can encourage, strengthen, and build each other up in ministry or business then everyone wins.

Matt has been her best friend for over 29 years, and they have two adult sons, Nick, and Bailey, and two beautiful daughters-in-love, Ashley (married to Nick), and Jules (married to Bailey) You can find out more and get connected with Melissa at www.MelissaMashburn.com.