
Riding In Cars With Men

A Clergywoman's Story

by Rev. Shirley M. Goodman

Group Discussion Guide

Questions for each chapter designed to stimulate conversation in a small group setting or be used as a basis for personal reflection.

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Notes

Chapter 1

1. Has there been a time in your personal, professional or church life when you had to adapt to a new culture, as I've described it in the book? Consider the following areas:

Gender - Ethnicity - Socio-economic - Other

2. Describe your experience. What effect did it have on you in each of these areas?

Mentally - Physically - Socially - Spiritually - Other

3. What "bumps" did you experience in the new culture?

- Can you describe the dissonance you felt?
- What was the stress like?

4. What steps did you take to adapt and engage? How did it go?

- What did you learn? How did you grow in your relationship with God as a result?

5. In what ways do you think adapting to other cultures can result in bringing glory to God?

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Chapter 2

1. List the positives of a working situation that is uncomfortable or clashes with your beliefs about men and women working together.
 - What can you learn/are you learning from this situation?
 - How can you affect change in a constructive way through your actions and behaviors?
2. In what ways have you searched Scripture to develop your ideas about women pastors, or even women in general as leaders in the church?
 - Share specific passages or stories that help you
 - Share other resources (books, speakers, sermons, etc.) that helped you shape your ideas pro or con
3. If you are someone who feels called to serve God as a pastor, how was/is your call affirmed by Scripture? By others?
 - Tell your story to the group.
4. What objections have you heard about women serving in pastoral leadership in the church?
 - How did you/will you respond to those objections?
 - Discuss how to avoid confrontations that could become ugly

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Chapter 3

1. Our life story has shaped us into who we are today. I dreamed of being an orchestra conductor, not a pastor. What did you/do you dream about becoming?
 - Have things turned out differently than you thought because of your relationship with God? How so?
 - Are you willing to let God lead you in a different direction than you plan? What are the risks you might need to take?
2. If you are a believer in Jesus, take some time to tell someone about your journey into Christianity, then listen to his or her story.
 - Encourage one another in the faith as you describe how you became a Christian. If someone in the group is not a Christian, listen respectfully and without judgment as they tell you why they have chosen not to be.
 - Either way - let the conversation bring glory to God.
3. Are there sins in your past that you know have been forgiven by faith in Jesus?
 - If not, you may want to find someone who understands and will listen to your story.
 - Tell how God has redeemed your poor choices from the past.
 - In what ways can a relationship with Christ help us make better choices in the future?
4. Have you ever known someone who was not accepted at church or other places in society because their lifestyle was viewed as ungodly?
 - How did this make you feel? What was/is your response?
 - What steps can you take to help those who might find themselves unwelcome?
5. God speaks to us in many ways: through Scripture, music, prayer, other people, etc. In what ways are you listening for God's voice in your life right now?
 - Are you aware of something that's being communicated to you specifically? What is your response?

Notes

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Chapter 4

1. Are you aware of the many ways the Lord has uniquely shaped your life to bring you to the way you serve God now?
 - Were there surprises along the way? What was unexpected?
 - Were there sacrifices to be made? Give an example
2. How has your family line impacted you? Is there a rich Christian heritage behind you?
 - Are you the first to go down this path?
 - Is there someone you see coming after you?
 - How might you spend your life as a Christian as a model for future generations?
3. If you are clergy, how did your call to ministry come about?
 - Is there someone you might encourage by telling him or her how the call evolved in your life? How could you make that happen?
4. If your job involves presenting information, do you ever listen to yourself to evaluate your presentation skills? Are you willing to try it?
 - Would you consider taking a public speaking class or seminar?
 - What would you hope to learn/improve on?
 - Talk about who your favorite speakers are and why - what is it about their voice or style that attracts you?
5. If you feel called to preach but don't get many opportunities, do you still write sermons as God inspires?
 - What are some imaginative ways you can explore to practice and thereby develop your preaching style?
 - E.G.: Are pastors in your area aware that you are available to fill in for them while they're away? How about local retirement communities or nursing homes that may need preachers?
 - Think creatively about how you can gain opportunities to preach.

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Chapter 5

1. Who are your role models in ministry and life? Name them and state why/how you consider them models to follow.
 - In what ways have they impacted you?
 - In what ways do you aspire to be like them?
2. Is it possible that someone is looking at you as his or her role model?
 - Who might that be and what responsibility does that place on you as you follow God?
 - In what ways can you actively engage with them to help them on their “journey from readiness to effectiveness”?
3. Who are the champions around you (male and/or female)?
 - Do they know who you are? Do they know you?
 - How can you network with them in a meaningful way?
 - If you can identify some champions, express thanks to them with a note of appreciation.
4. Is there someone you can be a champion for?
 - Are there capable women leaders around you that need an opportunity to shine?
 - How can you help promote these women into opportunities for growth?

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Chapter 6

1. Who are your formal and informal mentors? Name them - male & female.
 - In what ways have they impacted your life?
 - What did they teach/are they teaching you?
 - In what ways do you aspire to be like them?
2. Who are your aspirational mentors?
 - What about them has affected your life and the way you see things or respond to your circumstances and challenges?
 - How does Jesus fit into this picture?
3. Can you identify someone who is looking to you as his or her mentor?
 - In what ways do you think you are impacting their life?
 - Is there anything you would do differently to give away what you learned from your life experiences?
4. Do you need a mentor? Have you clearly defined what you need from that person?
 - How do you see yourself in the F.A.T. (faithful, available, teachable) model?
 - Are you a teachable person?
 - Is there something in this model you can improve upon?

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Chapter 7

1. Have you encountered people who hold a strong belief in the role of the pastor being only for a male?
 - How did you respond to them, if at all?
 - Did you try to convince them otherwise?
 - What did you do or say?
 - What was the outcome?
2. In what ways have you or do you show respect to those who do not accept women in leadership in the church?
3. Has someone's beliefs about women in church leadership ever hurt you or caused pain to you or a loved one?
 - If yes, in what way? How did you respond?
4. Can you name your advocates? Have you told them how important they are to you?
 - Can you name your adversaries? How can you respond with love to the way they treat you?
5. In what ways are you prepared to consider backhanded compliments without judgment?
6. Take time to look at yourself in light of 1 Corinthians 13.
 - Perhaps you have deeply embedded paradigms about yourself too.
 - Remind yourself as you look in the mirror of God's word to love yourself as Christ loves you.
 - Write a prayer of affirmation to yourself.

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Chapter 8

1. How would you describe your position on the issue of women in ministry - complementarian or egalitarian?
 - How did you arrive at this position, i.e. who/what shaped your beliefs?
2. If you are part of a denomination or an independent church, what is their position on the matter?
 - How do you see those beliefs manifested in the ways women can and cannot serve in the church?
 - Do you agree with their beliefs? Why or why not?
3. If you are a woman leader, have you ever struggled to be accepted in a predominantly male group?
 - If you didn't feel accepted, why not?
 - If you did feel accepted, what were the reasons?
 - Is there a way to inform or encourage other men about what made your experiences either positive or negative?
4. In what ways do you preview the teaching materials used in your ministry or church, either as a leader, teacher or a student?
 - What view of a woman's role do they support? Does it match with your views?
 - Listen closely to teachers in the media for what they promote about a woman's place in leadership.
5. What would your church look like on a Sunday morning if all the women were absent?
 - What impact would this have on ministries?
 - Think of a woman leader you admire and encourage her with words of affirmation.

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Chapter 9

1. Have you ever been embarrassed by or scolded for not being able to hold back your tears?
 - What was the situation? What happened?
2. How does someone crying at work affect you (male or female)?
 - How have you responded to it?
 - Women: how do you feel if you cry in front of your boss or other people at work? What reaction did you get from others?
 - Men: Have you ever been uncomfortable or surprised by a woman crying on the job? How do you react when a woman cries at work? Describe how it makes you feel.
 - Is there anything you would change about how you react to someone crying at work?
3. If you work on a team that includes men and women, what are ways you can lead a discussion about how to handle emotions together?
4. Is anger ever an emotional trigger for you or someone you work with?
 - Have you ever felt angry because you have something to say but your opinion or point of view doesn't seem important or is dismissed?
 - Describe a time when you got angry over something that just wasn't worth it. What did you learn from this experience?
5. If you are in a position that requires you to help other people with their emotions when they are frustrated or angry, think of a positive experience you've had: what did you do that contributed to a favorable outcome?

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Chapter 10

1. Do you know yourself well? Or are you prone to believe it when other people say “you’re this or that”?
 - In what ways have those kinds of messages positively or negatively impacted you throughout your life?
2. The second commandment tells us to “Love our neighbor as yourself.”
 - How would you describe your “self-love”?
 - Do you love yourself in a proper, Godly way, rather than with sinful self-centeredness?
3. Take time to write down at least 6 positive attributes you have. If you can’t think of that many, consider becoming more self-aware to discover the unique person God created you to be!
4. If you haven’t already done so:
 - Take an Emotional Intelligence profile (EQ). Then read one of the books about it or take a class to develop an understanding of how to improve. You can also hire a coach to help you.
 - Complete a Personality Temperament assessment using any accepted model: DISC, Personality Plus (Littauer), or Myers Briggs (a little more intense). Follow up by reading about personalities or attend a seminar to develop an understanding of your dominant style and how to better understand others.
 - Complete a StrengthsFinder profile, then read about how to understand and use your strengths, including as a leader. You can also attend a training class in your area or hire a coach.
5. Do you know what you’re good at and what you’re not? How does this impact the way you work and delegate tasks or ministries to others?
 - Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you have proper self-love - to see yourself as Jesus sees you.

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Chapter 11

1. Pastor or not, in what ways are you conscious of protecting your own “well-being” in life? What does this look like for you?
2. Have you ever been depressed or felt drained on every level - perhaps even burned out?
 - What did this feel like? What were the effects?
 - How did you take care of yourself during this time?
 - What did you learn from the experience about your own need for well-being?
3. If you are a congregant, are there small, yet significant, ways your pastor would welcome your help that might make his or her ministry easier? How?
 - Idea: Set up a meeting time during the week to have a conversation with them about it (not on Sunday!) Ask your pastor what he or she needs from you - don't assume.
 - Listen to see if your skills, abilities and gifts might be of help in a particular area. *Don't force yourself into the situation* - dialogue with your pastor. Be willing to make suggestions and help where you can truly assist, not just because it's what you want to do. Have the agenda of a servant!
4. In what ways can your pastor and their family be fully supported when they experience tough times?
 - What's the compassion level like in you or your church?
 - Can you respect the times your pastor needs to retreat?
5. Pray for your pastor's spiritual vitality and their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

For further insights on this subject, read *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* by Peter Scazzero, published by Thomas Nelson Publishing.

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Chapter 12

1. Why do you think a vacation or other forms of downtime are so important for a pastor? How do you respect this belief (or do you)?
 - When is the last time you (pastor) or your pastor (congregant) had a Sabbatical leave for several weeks just to rest and regroup? If never, how could this be made possible? Is it "I can't" or "I won't"?
2. What healthy boundaries have been established between the pastor and people where you serve? List several.
 - Have you discussed these together so that everyone knows what the boundaries are, why they exist and how to comply, e.g. when is an emergency an emergency, etc.?
3. Do you regularly get enough sleep?
 - Are there things that get in the way of a good night's rest that are within your control, e.g. going to bed earlier, eliminating caffeine or heavy meals late in the evening, etc.?
 - What guidelines can you set that might help you sleep more/better? List them.
 - What might keep you from honoring your own plans? Name it.
4. What is the result of you being overly tired or stressed?
 - Overeat
 - Eat foods that offer poor nutrition
 - Worry
 - Withdraw from people
 - Other
 - What negative effects might this have on the people around you?
 - What are the positive effects on the people around you when you are well rested and feeling refreshed?
5. Most people will not be able to fully understand the 24/7 life of their pastor. Pray that the Lord will protect them and they will take time to care for themselves without fear of negative feedback for the methods they choose in doing so.

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Chapter 13

1. If you are a congregant in a local church, do you have ideas about what role the pastor's spouse should have?
 - How did these ideas take shape in you?
 - Have you taken time to get to know the pastor's spouse and what they're like? If so, what role – if any – do they want to have in the church?
2. Are any of your expectations for the pastor's spouse unrealistic or based on stereotypes?
 - How can these expectations be adjusted or at least made representative of the spouse's gifts and graces?
 - How might a spouse's work schedule or home life also impact their ability to be involved at church?
3. Has the leadership of your church (e.g., church board) had specific conversations with the pastor (male or female) about how their spouse can or will serve in the church?
4. Have you ever had to address a problem or situation and you felt awkward because the person involved was the pastor's spouse? What did you do?
5. If your pastor is married, pray for the bond with their spouse to be strong and steady through the love of Christ. Support them in prayer and in other practical ways as possible. Respect the boundaries in their home and relationship.

If your pastor is single, don't pray for a spouse for them unless they request it. They may be very content as a single person or even feel called to a life of singleness. Pray that they will remain faithful with or without a spouse and find their completeness in the Lord.

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Chapter 14

1. What ideas do you have about how a minister should dress in the pulpit?
 - Clergy robe or stole
 - Suit & tie (men) or dress with high heels (women)
 - Jeans and T-shirt
 - Doesn't matter
 - Does the way the pastor is dressed impact how you receive the sermon? Yes or no; explain why.
2. In what ways, if any, have you seen the way people dress become a distraction to worship, either by the pastor or people in the congregation?
 - Do you ever consider whether how you dress for church (formally or informally) can support an atmosphere of worship or can be a distraction to others?
 - If so, why? If not, why not?
3. Women: how do you find a balance between trying to look attractive while not becoming the center of attention in a sexual way?
 - In what ways are you prepared to ward off unwelcome comments or advances from people of the opposite sex in church?
 - What other issues might a clergywoman have, if any, when dressing as a leader in ministry?
4. How should a pastor, male or female, go about handling someone who is dressed inappropriately for a church service? Is there such a thing?
 - How should a congregant go about talking with a pastor who they believe is inappropriately dressed?
5. Have you experienced productive ways to keep the issue of how people dress from becoming a source of argument in the church? Explain what they are and what you learned from them.