

Barbara Yoder



Did you feel that God specifically spoke to you to continue the church after your husband passed away?

"I never had a question. It was very interesting, and at times it was very difficult. Sunday after Sunday I would be in tears in my office saying, 'How am I going to preach?'

"[But] I never missed one Sunday, the year after he died, for a whole year. The only Sunday I didn't preach was the first Sunday after he died. Bishop Bill Hammond was there, and he preached that service because he was there for the funeral ... and [he] wanted to do to the funeral. But after that I preached every single Sunday. And often times I would tell my staff, 'Don't even talk to me, don't ask me how I'm doing; we have to get this service done. I'll talk to you later.'

"I remember there were times I would just have [to]' 'suck it up.' And I would go onto the platform just fighting back the tears. Eleven months later that period of intense grief was over."

What is the most encouraging sign you see regarding women in church leadership?

"I think one of the things that has really been powerful to me is the fact that great women leaders are finding each other. For me, that's been a tremendous encouragement. ... I believe that there are great women leaders, and I believe it's on the increase."

What advice would you give to a woman being called into full-time ministry?

"I think that there are several models in Scripture that you can look at when you are called into ministry. You have to

find somebody who will embrace you. Then you have to hold onto them for all you're worth. You can't just wait for them to talk to you. You have to be proactive.

"Elijah threw the mantle on Elisha. But Elisha had to make a choice to follow with his heart ... after Elijah, and he stayed with him until he died.

"People will tell me they want me to mentor them, but then they sit at home waiting for me to call them. I'm a very busy person. I'm teaching them to be proactive. "Somebody will throw a mantle on you and say, 'This is where you are supposed to go,' and the next step is, you've got to go after it. And that means you have to find that person. You've either got to hold onto them or find somebody that you can grab hold of and follow with your whole heart-[someone] who will actively mentor you.

"Like the young people I'm working with—I give them book assignments, both secular and spiritual. I'm teaching them how to be on the cutting edge in every area, not [only] to know about the Christian word but knowledgeable about the secular world. I myself stay very well read. I get about seven to 10 periodicals every month, including secular literature like *Atlantic Monthly*, *Newsweek* [and] *Fortune magazine*."

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