

Women on the Rise

by Maureen D. Eha

Even critics of women in ministry can't deny the supernatural call of God on these female leaders' lives.

At a Glance

- Beverly Crawford
- Kimberly Daniels
- Naomi Dowdy

Most of the women profiled did not set out to become full-time ministers, let alone apostolic church leaders. In fact, many of them had no formal Bible-school training when God first tapped them on the shoulder and they, like the prophet Jonah, tried to run from His call. But in spite of their seeming lack of preparation, their initial resistance and persecution from those around them, God led them supernaturally into leadership and is using them mightily to advance His kingdom. Will you fully heed to God's call on your life? These women did and they have impacted many lives on their journey.

Beverly Crawford

Beverly Crawford has been hungry for God since she was a little girl. But after her mother died when she was 10, she turned away from Him and focused on other pursuits.

In 1974, a friend invited her to church, and Crawford, at 29, gave her life to Christ and was filled with the Holy Spirit. She joined a large West Coast congregation and became involved in ministry, teaching Sunday school and a Bible study for women that eventually attracted men as well. It grew so large that the only venue big enough to host it was the 1,400-seat sanctuary.

"That's how things got started," she says. "That's how I learned to flow in the gifts."

During her 10 years at the church, Crawford was licensed and given responsibility for the youth department, the women's ministry and the singles ministry—yet she had never been to Bible school. All her training came from the Holy Spirit, she says.

In the mid-1980s, she stepped down from her church duties and began an outreach Bible study. At the time she had no intention of starting a church, but on the way to joining a different congregation, God spoke to her.

“He told me, ‘I didn’t tell you to join a church; I told you to start one,’” she says.

Today Crawford’s Bible Enrichment Fellowship International Church in Inglewood, California, has 4,000 members and supports radio and television ministries as well as an apostolic network, prophetic seminars, and numerous community outreaches.

Kimberly Daniels

To look at her now, poised and well-dressed, expounding on God’s Word before her 500-member congregation at Spoken Word Ministries in Jacksonville, Florida, you’d never know Kimberly Daniels spent her youth on the streets of that same city, running with a gang and becoming involved in crime and violence. A prostitute and drug addict for a time, Daniels was anything but the picture of a future pastor.

Today, however, the only hint of her former life is her familiarity with the devil’s ways—and her willingness to confront the enemy when she discerns he is encroaching on God’s territory. In fact, it was her boldness to take on the devil in order to bring deliverance to inner-city youth that first earned her a reputation as the “Demon Buster.”

Daniels kicked her cocaine habit when she joined the Army and then gave her life to Christ while on active duty in Germany.

She immediately began leading a Bible study and was preaching within six months.

When she returned to the U.S., she started a center to help girls get off drugs but had trouble finding a church that would accept them. Finally, God told her: "You pastor them." And out of her drug center came a church.

In addition to pastoring Spoken Word and overseeing Word Bible College, Daniels leads Commanders of the Morning, a large network of intercessors she trains in prayer and spiritual warfare. Through her Iron Sharpens Iron ministry she equips believers to operate in the fivefold ministry and encourages them to fulfill their God-appointed roles in the church. She also travels worldwide to minister in conferences and plans to open a second church, Rhema Way City Church, in Jacksonville this year.

Naomi Dowdy

When Naomi Dowdy was a girl, God spoke to her through the hymn "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning," a song that likens believers to the lights around a lighthouse. While she was singing the words of the chorus—"Let the lower lights be burning/ Send a gleam across the wave!"—in a church service one day, she heard a voice say aloud to her, "That's what I want you to do."

Later, in San Diego, Dowdy sat on the shore as often as possible—but it wasn't to let her light shine for sinners. She had drifted from God and was working the night shift so she could spend all day on the beach.

But immediately after she gave her life to Christ at age 25, Dowdy says, she began preaching, first on Skid Row in San Diego and later on the radio. Then God appeared to her in a vision and told her He was going to send her to "the islands of the sea." For nine years she worked as a missionary in the Marshall Islands, teaching at Bible schools, planting churches

and training pastors throughout Asia—until God offered her her own church.

“I didn’t want to be a pastor,” Dowdy says. “It was not even on the radar screen.”

But she agreed to lead the pioneer Assemblies of God church in Singapore for six months. Nearly 30 years later, she resigned as senior pastor of Trinity Christian Centre. She had grown the church from 42 to 4,500 members, founded a Bible school and seminary—now TCA College—and developed a cell model currently used by thousands of churches around the world.

Dowdy, with bases in both Dallas and Singapore, continues to give spiritual oversight to the church as the resident apostle. She is also the founder and president of Global Leadership Network and the Global Covenant Network.

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