



STUDY 4

Presbyterian Church Women Continue to Serve

By Rebecca Sherbino

But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do. What God is looking for in men and women. It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love. And don't take yourself too seriously –take God seriously.

Micah 6:8 (The Message)

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, please open our eyes to the needs all around us—financially, socially, and spiritually. Help us to see people as YOU see people—created and loved by you. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to reach beyond our comfort zones, to welcome interruptions and to use our most precious resource, our time, to meet the needs of others. Grant us grace when we fail to see the opportunities that you present, but to lean into your gentle nudging that brings us closer to others, and to you.

Jesus, we're grateful for your love that you lavish on us, giving us joy and peace and hope each day. Remind us to share the amazing gifts that you have given us. We are thankful for each person that you have placed in our path today. Help us to be your hands and feet on earth. Amen.

Hymn:

Option 1 watch the video of Matthew West's song, "Do Something":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_RjndG0IX8

Option 2: Sing hymn 637 – Take my life, and let it be consecrated

Scripture:

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Reflection: God's Call to Action

I was five or six years old the first time I heard a missionary speak at our church. His story was riveting. I was captivated by the immense needs that he described working overseas and the great challenge that he delivered to the congregation for people to "pick up their cross" and serve Jesus by ministering to people in poverty.

I remember feeling like my heart was burning with a desire to do something—to make a difference with my life.

At 16, I set off across the world with Teen Mission International on the most remote team I could find—the jungles of Papua New Guinea. I wanted to serve

God where the need was the greatest. We flew halfway across the world, drove for hours in the back of a pickup truck, spent two days going down a river on a makeshift barge and arrived deep in the rainforest. People lived in houses on stilts, didn't wear clothes, and there were murmurs of cannibalism. I spent eight weeks living in a tent and constructing a hospital with a team of 26. It felt like I was serving on the "front lines" and I loved it.

After finishing both an undergrad and master's degree in International Development, I again set off to the most challenging place I could find—Sudan, Africa, where war had ravaged the country for 30 years—to work in a small non-profit there. Again, it felt meaningful and I loved it.

I returned from Sudan six weeks before I was engaged to be married. Joel and I tied the knot and quickly approached the Presbyterian Church to consider sending us overseas. A year later, we arrived in Malawi, Africa where we served for 3 years—Joel worked in a church and I worked in the office that Presbyterian World Service and Development was partnered with doing development work.

Then, everything changed. I had always planned on working overseas long term, but we felt that God was calling us back to ministry in Canada...to a rural church in Southwestern Ontario. I was flabbergasted with God. There were no charities or NGO's out here, no homeless people living on the streets in this upper-middle class town! I wondered, "God...why did you give me this passion to work with people in poverty in the "developing world" and then put me in Paris?" In some ways, I felt like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness...God's plan felt totally unclear to me.

Years went by and I struggled. I raised my small babies, took on odd jobs, and served in our church nursery and on the music team. It was good, but I felt unfulfilled. I continually asked God why He had placed us here. What was MY purpose in the midst of my husband's ministry as a church pastor? How was I supposed to fulfill the dreams I felt that God had given me? Little did I know that God was laying the foundation of a plan that I couldn't see but was slowly taking shape.

I started noticing (maybe God opened my eyes) people on the margins in our church, in our community, and in my own neighbourhood. They came to the church for financial assistance, a warm meal and a listening ear. They struggled to make ends meet each month. But what I kept hearing was that they wanted to work

and, more than that, that they struggled to have a purpose and to be valued for doing something meaningful.

Over a number of years, I had been experiencing a nudging in my heart and a growing concern for people on the margins in our community. Every time the topic came up, it really bothered me. Why couldn't we do something MORE than just a grocery card or a meal? What could we do to address people's needs over the long term? God had slowly been lighting a passion to DO something, to find a way to care for people in my own community.

A late-night cup of coffee with a friend one night led to an idea to start a ministry through the church to provide jobs for people in need. We would cook gourmet soup together and the income would pay their salaries.

What started with the "mustard seed" of an idea took root. Now, six years later, The Raw Carrot Soup Enterprise has four ministry locations in churches that employ 27 people on the Ontario Disability Support Program with meaningful work that meets their needs and provides additional income (and the dignity of work) each month. Through God's grace, volunteer help, donations, grants from the Presbyterian Church, and people's interest in purchasing the soup, we have paid over \$100,000 in staff salaries and sold over \$200,000 worth of soup!



I've often thought about the Bible story in Esther when Queen Esther approaches her volatile husband, the King, to reconsider his edict to destroy the Jews. Her adopted father provided some wise advice as she tried to figure out her position as the wife of the King and how she could use her position to help.

“For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. ***And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?***” (Esther 4:14)

Looking back, what seemed like years of waiting was actually God preparing the right time, the right place, and a way in my own heart. He had the perfect plan for “such a time as this.”

Questions to consider:

Have you ever experienced a time of waiting for something? What was it? Why was it difficult? Have you, or someone you know, experienced a “Holy Discontent”? (A motivation to action that is motivated by the Holy Spirit)

Do you feel like you are in a period of waiting or action in God’s plan for your life right now? Is there something God is calling you to do or someone to minister to today?

Hymn: #461 – Be Thou My Vision

Closing Prayer (in unison):

Thank you, Jesus, for having a plan for my life that is specific to me. You have called me to serve you. It is a huge privilege to be involved in your ministry and to walk the path that you have created for my life. Help me to be patient in waiting for your plan to unfold and to step out in faith when the time is right. Help me to listen to the Holy Spirit’s leading each day. Amen.

Special Activities

- Watch the Raw Carrot Video of Why we started (2 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8OpeNy6cwg>
- And a video of a staff member talking about the impact of work on her life (1 minute)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9sqZHeZWtk&t=2s>
- If possible, purchase some Raw Carrot Soup and provide samples to the group!

**The Raw Carrot welcomes opportunities to speak to women’s groups or churches. Please reach out for more info! www.therawcarrot.com*