When Ladies' Meetings Miss the Mark

Johann & Cornelia van Deventer 11 March 2025



Johann and Cornelia serve on the eldership team of Joshua Generation Church. Cornelia has a doctorate in New Testament theology, has written this article from a place of desiring every saint to understand and apply the New Testament to their lives, and for every woman to find the fulfilment God has for them.

For most of my Christian walk, I despised attending ladies' meetings at church. I could not put my finger on it, but as soon as I saw invitations paraded with flowers and beautifully sketched cups of tea, I felt a sense of dread; not because I did not enjoy spending time with my sisters in Christ, but because I anticipated a morning of nice eats, extravagant décor, and the shallow waters of "tickle-my-ears" motivational talks that seemed to mirror what the world has to offer.

I have since joined a church where women's ministry and ladies' meetings are "meaty", where women are seen as disciples of Christ who need to pick up their crosses and follow him daily, and this has redeemed my perspective on the gathering of the church's ladies. I am grateful for this. However, I know this is not the experience of all of you out there. In light of this, I have thought it prudent to compile a list of ladies' meetings that might just be doing more harm than good:

The “You are Beautiful” Ladies’ Meeting

Sadly social media, women’s programming, and magazines have created an environment where women constantly evaluate and focus on their outward appearances. As female leaders, we are very aware of the attack on our sisters and ourselves. From eating disorders to shallow comparisons, overspending, and unhealthy obsessions, our ladies are at risk of being swallowed up by the shallow waters of vanity and the pain that accompanies it.

Insecurities are thus low-hanging fruit for any ladies’ meeting. What woman does not want to hear that she is beautiful? However, we will not combat an insecurity culture by trying to secure our ladies in what they can see in the mirror. We serve a God who does not dwell on outward beauty and splendour (see 1 Samuel 16:7) but who calls us to be beautiful in another way (1 Peter 3:3–4). Ladies’ meetings ought to shift our gaze from the external to the internal, which is what our Lord sees.

The “You are Enough” Ladies’ Meeting

Yes, women are exhausted. We live in a liminal time and space where the ideals of the 1950s housewife, the opportunities of the Industrial Revolution, the pressures of economic uncertainty, and the potential of our wombs all intersect, forcing us to make seemingly impossible choices. Most of us need to balance mothering, work, the home, and church, to name a few. However, the antidote to this dilemma is not the platitude, “You are enough.”

Rather, we ought to focus on faithfulness and obedience. None of us are enough. We need God’s grace for every waking moment of the day, and if we are not faithful in one domain because we have not stewarded ourselves well, it might be time to make some changes. In certain seasons of my life, I had to wake up earlier, give up on hobbies that I loved, cook in bulk, skip a full face of makeup, keep the television off, or just say no to things that seemed good but that would not make me a faithful and responsible steward of God’s time. Falling apart and doing everything half-hearted is not the answer. With full plates, it is up to us to search God’s heart for us and to prayerfully prioritise. The helpful alternative is preaching on faithfulness and the fact that we will give an account for our time. Additionally, we ought to encourage women that God sees our faithful service to Him (see 1 Corinthians 15:58).

The “You are God’s Princess” Ladies’ Meeting

Yes, I know that the Bible speaks of us as a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), and we do serve the King of Kings. I suppose we are princesses, but we are not Disney princesses. We are not Daddy’s little girls who can do no wrong.

While it is true that He loves and cherishes us dearly, we are not to make spoilt brats out of our

ladies. Leaving a ladies' meeting convinced that God simply accepts our wickedness because we are precious in His sight is not leading us to holiness – an essential part of our calling (see 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Whenever someone tells me that they are God's princess, I love to jest, "So was Sapphira" (see Acts 5).

The "Waiting for Your Boaz" Ladies' Meeting

I find these to be incredibly unhelpful. The first thing to point out is that not all women are married and not all women will marry. Some will remain single until they meet the Lord, others will be widowed, and others divorced. Yes, we need to know our role in marriage. This is what Paul asked the older women to teach in his letter to Titus (see 2:4). In a culture where marriages are sick, good theology on marriage is like honey – sweet, refreshing, and healing. However, obsessing about our Romeo-to-be is not helpful; if this is the theme of every ladies' meeting, we might be selling Rom-Com Christianity without knowing it.

What about healthy teaching on the cost of marriage or the wonderful opportunity that singleness is for dedicated service to the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 7:33–35)? Moreover, let's make sure to be considerate of unmarried sisters in sermons. Married or single, each lady deserves to be equipped and encouraged for faithfulness and fullness of joy in the Lord in her season.

The "Laugh it Off" Ladies' Meeting

Yes, we make mistakes and often they are hilarious. Moreover, you will be surprised how similar our sins are. For this reason, and to be relevant, ladies often fill meetings with hilarious encounters of rebellion, cheeky comments made to husbands, tales of over-indulgence, moments of madness, and harshness towards their children. These make great illustrations of our depravity and our need for God's forgiveness. Yet, if they create an environment where our sin is made light of, we are missing the mark.

We ought to spur one another on to love and godly deeds (Hebrews 10:24). A self-deprecating tale of how I missed the mark can be powerful, if the gospel rings through it. If not, I might just be a stumbling block to my sisters.

A Way Forward: The Three C's

So, where do we go from here? While there is no perfect ladies' meeting and while each meeting will be unique (sometimes it is good just to have cake and tea in order to connect and draw outsiders in), I usually ask myself whether at least one of the three C's are present in our meetings:

The First C is for Connection

With one another and with God. Ladies' meetings are great opportunities for us as sisters to seek true unity and to fellowship with one another and our Lord. Our ladies should walk away with an increased love for Christ and his bride.

The Second C is for Conviction

Our ladies' meetings should be marked by the grace of God – that both brings salvation and teaches us to say no to ungodliness (Titus 2:11).

The Last C Stands for Commission

When we experience wholeness and true fellowship among our sisters, we want to share it with others. Each lady should leave the meeting feeling empowered to serve and make disciples – both in and outside their local congregation.

This does not mean that we should not arrange flowers, eat cake, or dress up. These are wonderful ways to create an atmosphere, enjoy the finer things in life, and draw others in. Let's just make sure that we are stewarding these times well. There is nothing better than tea and transformation; cake and conviction; flowers and fellowship. Ladies' meetings are wonderful opportunities to love, grow, and learn. May we use every opportunity to make them count.