

The Secret

By Viki Rife

Mary walked into church and found a seat. A stay-at-home mom of three active children, she was relieved to have a few minutes to soak in some spiritual truths while the children were in their own class.



Everyone at church saw Mary as a capable woman who was quick to help others with babysitting, a meal, or a gentle touch. But Mary carried inside her a secret she felt she couldn't share with anyone. Growing up, school had been a real struggle for her. As a result, she felt inadequate to take on any responsibilities that involved teaching or mentoring anyone. Her sense of failure as a student was hampering her freedom to grow spiritually and embrace opportunities to learn. She was sure she couldn't be trusted to study the Bible herself, but often wondered if she was missing something precious.

Katherine walked into church and sat next to Mary. A professional woman, Katherine was viewed by everyone as being very effective in her work. People at church often came to her for advice in business matters. But deep inside Katherine harbored a fear that sometimes threatened to incapacitate her. What if the advice she was giving wasn't truly in line with Biblical principles? She struggled with inner doubts as she kept noticing discrepancies between how she had been taught to lead in business and what God's Word seemed to teach.

Sitting next to each other, these women seemed to come from two different worlds. Each thought the other was content and self-assured about her role in the church. Mary thought Katherine had everything together, while Katherine envied Mary's practical instincts about ministering to others.

Mary and Katherine could have sat in the same church for years in a relationship limited to exchanging a few pleasantries from time to time. However, each of them decided to register for a class that was being offered at a nearby church for ten hours on a weekend.*

Mary was relieved to find that the class did not feel threatening. In fact, she found she enjoyed exploring the Bible with the other women. She quickly saw ways that she would be able to use the truths she learned in her home and with the many others who often confided in her.

Katherine, accustomed to taking classes to enhance her leadership potential, found that the class not only challenged her to grow, but touched a part of her soul that deeply longed to use her gifts to draw others to Christ. She was delighted to find that there were other women like herself who were also eager to grow in their understanding of God's ways.

In almost seven years of offering classes in partnership with Grace Seminary's Center for Women's Leadership Studies, it has been a pleasant surprise to discover how many women in our churches are hungry to deepen their understanding of God and develop their gifts to serve Him. It is obvious that many women have a passion for ministry but feel ill-equipped to do what their hearts are calling them to do to serve God with all their being.

It's obvious that the Center needs to expand to meet the specific needs of more women. Beginning with the Essentials of Prayer class in Winona Lake Indiana, this weekend, we will be adding new classes to the program, and by 2020 new certificate programs will be in place. Women will be able to choose a *Certificate in Biblical Foundations*, taking classes that are basic for any believer, or go on to a *Certificate in Biblical Leadership*. The leadership certificate will be considered a more advanced certification than the current *Certificate in Women's Leadership Studies*.

If you want to finish the Certificate in Women's Leadership Studies before the change takes place, here are some steps you can take:

- Determine which courses you still need.
- See if your church is willing to host the classes you need in 2018 or 2019.
- Or, keep an eye on our website to see where classes are being offered and plan a trip, maybe with some friends, to participate in the classes you need.
- Check our FAQs page.
- Contact us at 866.345.1430 with other questions you may have.

For more information or to view our FAQs visit our website at wgusa.org/leadership-studies