

the best *you can be*

Lesson

5



A SUPPORTIVE *woman*

*"Beloved, let us love one another,
for love is of God; and everyone who
loves is born of God and knows God."*

1 John 4:7, NKJV



WOMEN NEED WOMEN, and everyone needs a supportive friend or two. Without someone we can trust, we can shrivel up and die. God made us to live together in peace and harmony and to support one another. Sin marred this ideal, yet as Christians in a community of forgiveness and love, a supportive network can be created.

Anne Sullivan was an unwanted, unloved, and blind teenager. Her mother had died, her father had deserted her, and her only brother died while they were in a miserable orphanage. All alone, she retreated into herself. In anger, she kicked and screamed when people came near. Her caregivers labelled her as mad. However, a kind nurse loved and supported her and won her confidence. In time Anne Sullivan became Helen Keller's teacher and helped her overcome the isolation of blindness and deafness. Both Anne and Helen knew what it was to be supported by a caring friend.

God's Word says, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7).

Mother Teresa is an inspiration to many. She helped thousands of poor people, but she was able to do this only because she had a supportive network of helpers.

Many famous women have done great things for humanity but they do not do it alone. They have created a large network of supporters around them. No woman is an island. We do not and cannot walk alone. We cannot achieve success alone. None of us live to ourselves, accomplishing everything on our own (see Romans 14:7).

SIX LEVELS OF A NETWORK

Today we often hear the word *network*. This refers to a person's CIRCLE of contacts. This circle consists of six recognizable levels of association:

Level 1 - Very close friends. These are people we share with at an intimate level the deeper things of our souls—our hopes, fears, joys, and concerns. We may have only two or three friends at this level.

Level 2 - Good friends. These are people (perhaps 12-20) we see often because we enjoy being with them. We eat, party, talk, travel together. We share but not as intimately as with those at Level 1.

Level 3 - Casual friends. In this group (50-100) are our neighbours and church family. There are warm feelings when we meet; we share many of the same experiences but not our close feelings.

Level 4 - Work associates and extended family. We see these people on a daily basis in connection with work or school, or occasionally at family gatherings.

Level 5 - Faraway friends. These are people who have moved from the inner circles of our network toward the outer edge. Either they or we have moved. We exchange letters, emails.

Level 6 - Acquaintances. These are people we have met; we know their names and a little about them, but we don't really count them as friends. The number in this group may be in the hundreds or even thousands.

Church growth experts tell us that 85% of members baptized in the church come from among our personal networks. They also tell us that a new member needs at least seven close or good friends within the church if that new member is to remain. We need each other, we depend on each other, and women especially need other women as supportive friends.

SIX HABITS TO EXPAND A NETWORK

- 1. Experience doing.** She expands her network by learning new skills through classes, workshops, seminars, sports, church work, or community activities.
- 2. Risk linking.** A woman of excellence seeks out ways to meet new people, especially those who are successful. She will risk linking with others.
- 3. Show belonging.** The successful woman gets involved. She shows that she belongs by participating in sponsored activities and showing her enthusiasm. She is a booster for any group she joins.
- 4. Blessing through gifts.** The woman of excellence uses her gifts to bless others. By finding a need and filling it, she draws people and success to her doorstep.



5. Finding a mentor. The aspiring woman finds a mentor, a successful woman or women, who can help her become a woman of excellence. A mentor gives wise counsel, listens, assists, and shares.

6. Sharing what she knows. The successful woman shares what she knows with others. She looks for opportunities to teach, share, write, lead a seminar, or simply talk with a friend.

In Titus 2:3,4 we read, "Let the aged women... teach the young women" (KJV).

Women need women. Many hurting women are in our churches and communities: grieving women, abused women, battered women, forsaken women, addicted women, lonely women. There are many needs, needs that only another woman can fill. Wonderful things happen when women begin to support one another. Miracles occur when women begin to expand their networks.

RATE YOURSELF

On a scale of 1-5, rate yourself in your use of the following methods of expanding your network. Five is the best.

- The successful woman seeks new experiences, learns new skills, and enjoys gaining new information.

1	2	3	4	5
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- The woman of excellence risks connecting with people and organizations.

1	2	3	4	5
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3. The successful woman becomes part of a group by participating, cooperating, and expressing enthusiasm.

1 2 3 4 5

4. The woman who is a winner shares her talents. She seeks a need; then tries to fill it.

1 2 3 4 5

5. The woman of excellence finds a mentor to help her succeed.

1 2 3 4 5

6. The successful woman looks for ways to share her expertise with others.

1 2 3 4 5

PERSONAL GROWTH EXERCISES

1. Think of the biggest achievement of your life. Write that achievement at the top of a sheet of paper. Under it make a list of all the people who helped make it possible. Then take a moment to thank the Lord for the network of friends who helped you achieve.
2. Draw a small circle in the center of a sheet of paper. Surround it with five concentric circles. Let each circle stand for one level

of your personal network. Label the circles. Write the names of at least three people who fit into each circle.

3. Make a list of women who have served as your mentors. What is one thing you learned from each woman?
4. Make a list of women for whom you have been mentor or coach in some aspect of life. What did they learn from you?
5. For the next month ask God to lead you to a woman for whom you can support and with whom you can share something God has taught you.

SUCCESS PRINCIPLE

We cannot be successful alone. What we become depends a great deal on the people in our personal networks.

MY PRAYER FOR TODAY

Dear God, You made me for fellowship and company. We need each other and a supportive friend or two. Thank You for my friends who support me. Please help me to be a supportive friend to someone who needs a listening ear and a caring heart. When I need someone to bless me, please guide me to those who would be my true friends. Thank You for Jesus, my very best friend and chief supporter.



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