



Susan's Story

THE FIRST GRADUATE OF
LEAD MINISTRY TRAINING

North Hills Community Church, Taylors, SC

At the time LEAD Ministry Training was introduced at North Hills Community Church, Susan Wood was a 42 year-old single mom with two daughters and a demanding job that often required her to work overtime in an attempt to meet her financial obligations. She began attending NHCC four years previously after going through a painful divorce, and God had been doing a great deal in her heart and life. Now she was eager to put herself in a situation where she could grow deeper spiritually. Her hurts and disappointments were still very fresh and real, and she had a growing desire to have the Lord use her as an encouragement in the lives of other ladies in similar situations. So Susan enrolled with the first class of LEAD students.

The Head

Even though Susan began the program with enthusiasm, about halfway through the first modular class, she contacted the LEAD coordinator to say that this program probably wasn't for her. She had not completed all of her pre-class assignments on time and she had not done very well on a quiz that was given during class. Susan later explained that her perfectionistic tendencies were resisting the reality that she was not able to have everything done just right and on time. She also said that she expected to receive an easy way out because everyone knew she was a struggling single mom.

Susan was surprised to hear the coordinator explain that ministry leadership training carries a difficult price tag no matter who you are. He encouraged her to see the late nights and sacrifices of time as worth the investment, and he also helped her to see that the most important thing was not her grades but what she was learning and how God was working in her own heart. That week was a turning point for Susan. God freed her from focusing on the tasks and fueled her enthusiasm to learn everything she could about God so that He could use her in the lives of other people.

As a result, Susan actually completed more classes during that first year than any other LEAD student and she did extremely well with all of her assignments. She completed classes in Christian Theology and Biblical Counseling, which established a solid basis for her conversations with single parents about who God is and what His perspective is on their life situations. Her personal spiritual development was greatly impacted by the course on Corporate Worship and she was also impacted in her relationships with other people for the sake of the gospel through the Evangelism elective.

Susan was able to attend the Biblical Manhood/Womanhood Conference in Dallas, Texas, where she gained a great perspective on ministry in light of what the scriptures teach about marriage and the church. In connection with this conference, Susan developed her own position paper explaining a biblical view of marriage, divorce and remarriage. Walking through this project with the Lord was an important time for Susan as God continued to pour healing into her heart and give her a love for His truth that superseded her own disappointments and hurts. While in Dallas, Susan attended a large church with a vibrant ministry to single parents. She interviewed the staff there and gained insight about how to minister to this segment of the church. She came home with a renewed burden to see the single parents encouraged, but at the same time she longed for them to be integrated into the church family as a whole rather than being segregated into a specialized segment.

The Heart

While all of this educational training was progressing, Susan was meeting one day a week before work with an older godly woman who was serving as her mentor. Jean Mathews had raised two boys, one of which had wrestled with addiction issues over many years. Jean had been used of the Lord in teaching Ladies Bible Studies and discipling numerous younger women. In Jean's dining room, Susan found a place where she could lay her heart on the table before a faithful friend who would challenge her, advise her, encourage her in the Word and always pray for her. As this relationship developed over a 3-year period, Susan saw herself maturing in specific areas because of Jean's influence, and Jean was always quick to say that she had been the primary beneficiary from having time with Susan.

The Hands

Susan's experience in LEAD ministry training was not limited to books and meetings with her mentor. She found herself becoming more and more involved in ministry to single moms as the months passed. Susan began by getting to know other single moms in the NHCC congregation and trying to discern their greatest needs and burdens. After a time of building relationships, Susan planned a small-scale ministry to these single moms. She and her daughters delivered roses and baked cookies and personally delivered them. Susan was surprised that the delivery of these gifts became a weeklong project because the ladies were most eager just to spend time talking and praying with her.

After that outreach, Susan began to put together a core team of ladies who shared her burden to encourage and help single moms. Some of these team members were single moms themselves and others were not. This team soon found themselves mobilizing the entire church family to build deeper relationships with single parents in preparation for the upcoming Christmas outreach that would focus on single parents. Over 60 single parents attended that outreach, most of whom had no previous connection to NHCC. After the event Susan was consumed with the follow up of all of these newcomers. Some of those ladies made personal decisions to follow Christ. Some of them received vital help with physical needs and many of them became integrated into the NHCC church family. As a result of two years of ministry experience, Susan developed a vision for *Mosaic*, an official NHCC ministry to single moms that she presented to the church elders. She organized a formal leadership team and launched the ministry utilizing a monthly luncheon to single moms. The continuing impact of *Mosaic*, and specifically of Susan's leadership, cannot be quantified.

God has taken this ordinary, hurting single mom and prepared her head, heart and hands to minister to people in a way that far exceeded any of Susan's desires or expectations. To Him be the glory!