

## ***Enlightened Power: How Women are Transforming the Practice of Leadership***

Ed Linda Coughlin, Ellen Wingard, Keith Hollihan (Jossey-Bass, 2005)

Forty articles on aspects of women in leadership – wow! This is a one-stop guide to where it's at on women leaders in business and the voluntary sector.

There's little that's directly about women in Christian ministry, but much that can be applied. The underlying message: 'women are knocking on the door of leadership at the very moment when their talents are especially well matched with the requirements of the day'.

Linda Coughlin's introduction introduces the task of recasting leadership, from the confines of traditional (male) models to the concept of 'enlightened power': involves inclusive leadership models with an equal partnership of men and women, and about productive work in an environment which is positive for all stakeholders. That sounds like an example for the church: we've forgotten that God gave us Adam and Eve, Priscilla and Aquila hundreds of years before the concept of 'leadership' was invented!

The book wrestles with many of the questions which we are also asking: do women want to be leaders? How can women bring their whole selves to the practice of leadership? What part can mentoring play? How do women's speech patterns sometimes diminish our impact? What are women's leadership talents? How do women juggle work and children?

Some highlights:

- 'Cultivating the still point' – the need to be reflective.
- 'Leading authentically' – which argues that women should find it easier to be authentic, but women are more concerned for others, and this may make us tend towards not rocking the boat. This piece, interestingly, notes that women (and men) are more effective leaders when they spend time exploring spirituality.
- 'Good girls don't brag, do they?' – explores the consequences of women disliking talking about themselves and their accomplishments.
- 'The sustainable advantage' – what women have to offer; and how as spheres and responsibilities for men and women become more similar, boundaries between 'masculine' and 'feminine' will blur.

A dull cover, and inevitably, some chapters are more interesting and relevant than others. But it makes fascinating reading.

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