



Thank you for listening to Kalos Conversations!

EPISODE 2: OUR STORY

In this episode, we share in telling the story of how the whole "kalos" thing got started.

PATTI'S STORY

There are two questions that have been companions as I have moved through various church experiences throughout my life as a woman:

1. Where do I fit?
2. What value do I have as a contributor in the church?

My husband and I began attending Seven Mile Road over 10 years ago. We were newly married and settling into the area. Our desire was to give ourselves to the work of the church in our local community and be changed by the faithful preaching of God's Word. Gospel centrality, orthodox theology, relational community - these were the pillars that drew us in. Those early years were times of deep wakefulness to the glories of Jesus, understanding Scripture in its entirety and vulnerable, transparent relationships. It was in those years we had four children, giving ourselves to this calling of mother and father.

I willingly, with excitement, received each of my children with joy. I clung to the Gospel in ways I had not before, as I was aware of my limits and brokenness. I was trained as a social worker and after our second child was born, left the hospital I worked and devoted all my energy to our home. It was in this season those questions began to rise again.

Seven Mile Road has always been vocal about the value of receiving children, welcoming them and cherishing them. The unseen work of raising and loving them was affirmed. Our men have been regularly challenged to believe the Gospel and shoulder the weight of responsibility for the good of those in their care. The women have also been welcomed and encouraged, but there wasn't clarity as to how their voices were part of the Gospel advancing. Where was the partnership in working together for seeing the church thrive and community engaged?

There had been different attempts through the years to connect women, create space for training and discipling and avenues for them to serve. They were adequate, but there was something better. Matt, after listening to the women in his church, creatively proposed a year-long training track. The purpose was to prepare women to help the pastors serve the church in more purposeful ways. The means to get there was to study God's Word with a focus on what it means to be a woman and how she can use all that God has given her to glorify Him in the home, the community, and the church.

I was privileged to be in the first group of women who walked through a year together. Our pastors led the monthly time over the course of a year. It was an experiment, as we navigated sharing our lives openly, praying, and discussing Scripture as we learned side-by-side. It was a breath of fresh air to see our pastors pursue these women, listen to them, affirm, and even at times correct. They had taken the shepherding role seriously to be responsible for all the souls God had given them.

As that year came to a close, we sensed that this model was fruitful and necessary to train many more of our women. The question arose: who would lead it? It was evident that leading together, brother and sister, male and female, would be the most helpful for the women going forward. This approach would model for our women how we work together, both bringing unique, distinctive strength for their flourishing. I have been honored to work towards this end for the past three years.

The year together and Matt affirming my gifts as a teacher and leader began to put to rest the questions of where I belong and what I can contribute to the church. We have seen the fruit of this in our women as well. Our pastor knows the stories of the women in his church, he has listened tenderly to their unique experience in the world and has been open to their thoughts and insight influencing him in his leadership. He has called women to lead in their giftings, serving and loving others for the advance of the Gospel. There has been partnership where once isolation, clarity of mission where once confusion and fuller engagement in the work God has called us to in the command to make disciples.

KRUSE'S STORY

Several years into our life as a church, some of our most holy and most invested women came to me, each in their own way, with two straightforward requests:

1. "I really want to be a holy woman. Can you help me get there?"
2. "I really want to serve the church. Can you help me get there?"

Here's what those conversations sounded like:

My sisters: "I really want to be who God is calling me to be as a woman, but I'm not exactly sure what that entails. I am hearing a thousand conflicting voices, from Christians and non-Christians

alike, about what a woman is and isn't. I hear you talk from the pulpit about things like "men and women as equal yet distinct" and "gospel-adorning femininity" and "gladly embracing the sexuality that God has assigned to you" and "pursuing rightly ordered relationships in the home and in the church," and my soul is stirred, but I'm not clear on what all of it means. I know that God created us male and female, and that this creative intent of His was good. I want to embody the clear teaching of Scripture on these things, but I don't know where to begin. While I long to be an articulate ambassador to the Bostonian women we are meeting on where our church lands on all this, no one has taken the time to sit with me and walk me through the Biblical grounds of these doctrines or their implications in real time. Oh, and I have, like, a billion questions. Can you help?"

Me: "Woah. And yes, absolutely."

My sisters: "Also, I love our church, deeply. I want to be fully invested in seeing her thrive. I want to make disciples. I want outsiders to meet Jesus here. I have ideas, gifts, energy, passions, experience. I can teach, organize, strategize, write, sing, counsel, and more. I can help. I get that our pastor/elders are going to be called and qualified men who teach and exercise authority in the life of the church in a unique way. But how do I - as a gospel-believing, femininity-embracing, family-prioritizing, spiritually-gifted woman - get mobilized to partner with you in doing gospel work? Am I free to do that? And, if so, can you train me to do that well?"

Me: "Woah. And yes, absolutely."

I left these conversations feeling two things:

First was corrected. We had neglected to love our women well in some pronounced ways. Our lack of doctrinal instruction, organizational clarity, and practical training was limiting their ability to obey Jesus and make disciples in their homes and in the church. This had to change.

Second was energized. If they were in, I was in. I resolved to get into the trenches with our women and ask the Spirit to help us address both of these concerns in a way that would help foster personal holiness and gospel advance. And Kalos Track was born.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What does it look like for your church to create space for listening to one another?
- Are the women that Jesus has given you being well-trained in embracing gospel-centered femininity themselves and in leading other women to do the same?

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