



## **Allyship by Catherine Gates**

*“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”*

—Philippians 2:3-4

Successful, enduring organizations are those in which everyone who works there has the opportunity to contribute, grow, and thrive. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to find people on the team who are marginalized for a variety of reasons and aren't given the same level of recognition for their accomplishments or opportunities to advance as others. Some of the reasons people are overlooked are related to gender, ethnicity, age, or diverse abilities, but there could be other reasons that are less obvious as well. Ultimately, when people on the team are marginalized for any reason, everyone is negatively impacted.

A study done by Catalyst in 2021 found that 68% of those respondents who were people of color are constantly on guard to protect themselves against bias and unfair treatment at work. Women still struggle to advance in their careers due to a phenomenon referred to as the “broken rung.” For every 100 men promoted from entry-level to manager, only 87 women are promoted (Source: McKinsey & Company).

When you come to work with your guard up, your awareness focused on watching out for potential threats, or your energy poured into fighting against the “broken rung,” it drains you of creativity and hinders your ability to be the very best version of yourself you can.

On the other hand, data shows that when people don't feel a need to have their guard up, it leads to improved employee outcomes and significant benefits to the organization. \*  
(<https://www.catalyst.org/reports/allyship-curiosity-employees-of-color/>)

Throughout the gospels, Jesus shows us by example how we are to include people who find themselves overlooked or pushed to the margins. From women to people with disabilities to social outcasts, Jesus actively pursued and worked to include people whom others would ignore.

You probably know people in your workplace who exhibit great potential, but for one reason or another, are being overlooked. You may even be one of them. A primary way to remediate the problems caused by marginalization is allyship. A workplace ally is someone who uses their personal privilege or influence to support coworkers who are typically marginalized, underrepresented, or otherwise struggle with being heard, valued, and given what they need to advance in their careers.

You can only have a thriving culture to the extent that *all* team members are given the opportunity to flourish in their work. Supporting others in their ability to contribute their best and grow yields benefits for the entire team and the organization as a whole. Investing in others through allyship is good for everyone. When you commit to being an ally, you provide an example to others to do the same.



*“Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” —1 Peter 4:10*

What does it look like to be an ally for others at work?

**Educate yourself about what others are experiencing.** Take time to get to know your coworkers both professionally and personally. Invite someone you see being marginalized to coffee or lunch. Ask them about their experiences and what kind of support they need.

**Recognize and correct exclusion.** There are times when being an ally means speaking up on someone’s behalf. Find ways to do so that are not combative or accusatory. For example, if you hear someone making derogatory remarks about someone, you might share positive contributions that person has made or skills you have seen her exhibit. If you notice someone’s comment was ignored in a meeting, ask the person to repeat it. It might sound like, “Stacy had an interesting idea. Stacy, can you expand on what you said earlier?”

**Invite others in.** You can be an ally by inviting or recommending those you see being excluded into projects or discussions that align with their skills. Oftentimes, when people are excluded, it is the result of subconscious bias. In other words, those leaders may not even realize they are doing it. By recommending someone you know has the skills but is being overlooked, you are helping to shift the dynamic.

**Be strategic.** If you see someone being marginalized or overlooked, take time to pray about ways you can be an ally. Avoid being impulsive. Invest time in getting to know the person, understanding their skills, and what they need. Identify the best ways to use your voice and influence to support the person.

### Discussion Questions

1. Who do you know in your workplace is being marginalized or overlooked?
2. What can you do to invest in getting to know that person so you can become an ally?
3. What steps can you take to pursue the marginalized and be an ally for others?
4. In what ways could you benefit from having an ally?
5. What can you do to build the allyship relationships you need to advance and grow?



**Catherine Gates** is 4word Vice President Programs and Partnership. She is a speaker, writer, and leader in the faith and work movement. She is passionate about helping people achieve more of their God-given potential with confidence by integrating faith into every area of life. Her career journey has been diverse and circuitous, ranging from software consulting to project management, marketing and sales, and leadership training, to nonprofit leadership. She has been helping people integrate their faith and work since 2013.

Catherine is the author of *The Confidence Cornerstone: A Woman’s Guide to Fearless Leadership*. She has contributed to several faith-and-work Bible studies, numerous YouVersion reading plans, and books from other authors including the iWork4Him and sheWorks4Him publications. Catherine is on the steering committee for the National Faith & Work Association (NFWA.org) and holds a bachelor’s degree in Christian Leadership.



**4word** is a global community of Christian women in the workplace. Our mission is to help women in the workplace reach their God-given potential with confidence.

### **Why 4word?**

At 4word, we know you want to reach your God-given potential so you can have a Kingdom impact on your workplace and the world. To do that, you need resources for professional and spiritual growth - and a community of like-minded women to cheer you on!

The problem is your time is limited and meaningful connections are hard to find. This can leave you feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and isolated on your life's journey.

**We believe you shouldn't have to navigate work, life and faith on your own because God designed you for community. You are worthy to be surrounded by loving and supportive women who "get you."**

**We understand you face unique challenges as a Christian woman in the workplace, which is** why we create easy-access opportunities for leadership development, spiritual growth, and connections to influential women around the globe.

### **Our Simple Empowerment Plan:**

- Connect to a community – We offer virtual and in-person Community Groups specifically designed for working women – and we also have special groups for executive women.
- Access relevant content – 4word's podcast, blog, and our Community Group Discussion Guides are specifically geared to women in the workplace to help thrive on your journey.
- Get matched with a mentor – From our pool of over 220 amazing mentors we connect you with the right fit for a transformational mentoring experience through 4word's Mentor Program

**Join the Journey** to empower 10 million Christian women in the workplace to change the world by 2030. Scan the QR code below to learn more.

