



Created for Collaboration by Catherine Gates

*“All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.”
—1 Corinthians 12:27 NLT*

The Burden of Isolation

“It all depends on me.”

If you’ve ever said or thought those words, you’re not alone. More and more women are experiencing burnout—not because they’re not capable, but because they’re working in isolation. Remote work, increased demands, and the pressure to prove ourselves have quietly pushed us away from the relational support we need. But God never meant for us to carry the load alone. He created us for collaboration.

Work-from-home and hybrid models can *feel* convenient (no commute!) but can also make it harder to connect and build relationships that nurture trust and collaboration. Casual hallway conversations and spontaneous brainstorming sessions are harder to come by—and those are the moments that water the roots of strong teamwork.

Research shows that isolation at work doesn’t just feel hard—it has real consequences:

- **Increased burnout:** When we carry the load alone, stress rises and energy drains.
- **Mental health decline:** Anxiety, depression, and self-doubt are more common when we’re disconnected.
- **Lower creativity and innovation:** Solo work stifles innovation. Collaboration sparks better solutions.
- **Weaker job performance:** Isolated workers are less engaged and more error-prone.
- **Struggles with impostor syndrome:** Without feedback or support, women are more likely to doubt themselves, feel unseen, and hesitate to contribute.

If you’re feeling exhausted, or are on the verge of burnout, working in isolation might be a contributing factor.

DISCUSS

1. To what extent do you experience working in isolation, having to produce results that depend solely on your strengths and abilities? How many times have you said to yourself, “If I don’t do it, no one will”?
2. What pressures or fears keep you from asking for help or partnering with others at work?



God's Design for Work is Collaboration

*"Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed."
— Ecclesiastes 4:9*

God designed us to work together, just as the parts of a body work in unity with one another so that our physical bodies function well (Romans 12:4-5). Each of us has unique strengths, experiences, and insights to contribute—and areas where we need others to fill in the gaps. None of us is meant to do it all. We were created for collaboration.

From the beginning, God invited humanity to work *with* Him (Genesis 1:28, 2:15). But when Adam and Eve chose to act apart from God, their sin fractured their relationship with Him and with each other (Genesis 3:16-19). Jesus' redemptive work restores those relationships and invites us back into unity—with God and with one another.

Paul reinforces this vision in his letters. We are one body with many parts (1 Corinthians 12:12-27), each called to use our gifts in service to one another. We are co-workers with God (1 Corinthians 3:9), empowered to bring His Kingdom to bear in every space we work.

DISCUSS

3. What does it mean to be "co-workers in God's service" in your work context?
4. Where could you use the support and skills of others to boost your ability to succeed and produce exceptional results?

What Collaboration Can Look Like

When I entered the faith-and-work space, I noticed hundreds of ministries serving the same mission—but most working in silos. As I reached out, I found hesitation: fear of losing control, uncertainty about alignment, or simply not seeing the potential. But when hearts and minds opened, the fruit was undeniable.

One connection with the Theology of Work Project began with a casual idea and led to the creation of over 20 collaborative YouVersion reading plans. Another collaboration with iWork4Him led to 45 podcast episodes amplifying the voices of Christian women at work.



Here are some ways you can consider collaborating on your team, across teams, or with other organizations:

- **Invite input:** Ask colleagues to brainstorm solutions or give feedback.
- **Tap into others' strengths:** Partner with someone who brings a skill you lack.
- **Co-lead a project or initiative:** Share vision and responsibility with a trusted colleague.
- **Write together:** From blogs to training materials, collaborative writing adds depth and clarity.

Collaboration is most fruitful when everyone involved is aligned in purpose, willing to contribute, and open to growth. It's not something to force—but something to seek with discernment and intentionality.

DISCUSS

5. Where have you seen collaboration work well in your organization or industry? What made it successful?
6. What one project are you beginning (or hoping to start) that could benefit from collaboration?

Be a Catalyst for Collaboration

*“For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.”
— 1 Corinthians 3:9 NIV*

After eleven years in the faith-and-work space, I joined the 4word team because of a shared desire for collaboration. What began as a conference partnership between **Women in the Marketplace** and the **Polished Network** became a deep alliance. Eventually, 17 organizations came together in 2024 to explore how we could support each other. That gathering laid the foundation for the merger between Polished and 4word.

Collaboration isn't always easy. It stretches us and exposes gaps in our patience, communication, and flexibility. But it also opens the door to incredible growth, deeper joy, and Kingdom impact. What might God make possible through your next collaboration?

DISCUSS

7. What would an increase in collaboration make possible in your work?
8. What's one step you could take this week to begin or deepen a collaboration?



Catherine Gates is 4word Vice President of Programs. She is a speaker, writer, and leader in the faith and work movement. Catherine is passionate about helping women achieve more of their God-given potential with confidence by integrating faith into every area of life. Her diverse and circuitous career journey ranges from software consulting to project management, from 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 podcasts, weekly blogs, 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:** Through the 4word Mentor Program, we connect you with the right fit from our pool of over 200 highly experienced mentors for a transformational mentoring experience.
- **Join a 4word Collaboratory:** Accelerate your leadership growth through a **safe, guided program** where women like you—ambitious, faith-driven, and called—come together to grow as leaders and tackle real-world workplace challenges through the lens of Scripture and collaboration.



- **Executive cohorts and EW4C:** Women at the executive level have their own unique needs. 4word's executive cohorts and EW4C forums provide a curated space for these leaders to grow spiritually and professionally alongside like-minded peers.