

What do you do when you are a hospitality ministry and one of the main things you do is fill your home with people, but COVID-19 restrictions severely limit group size?

When our ministry is rooted in the spiritual growth of people, and the usual methods that we love and employ are no longer accessible, at times we find ourselves living in what feels like a fallow field. Are we doing enough, being with enough people?

Author Tish Harrison Warren reminds us, “We can be as patient as a fallow field because we know there are gifts promised by a Giver who can be trusted.”

We are realizing that we have received many gifts as we have waited for restrictions to ease. During the weeks and months of texts, phone calls, limited lunches, masked small groups (with a few people that I have never seen without a mask), and the long spaces between seeing some people, God has been faithfully growing us and those in our community. He is not held back by COVID-19 restrictions.

Here is how my friend Felicia sees this last year:

I remember meeting Rick and Paula the summer they arrived in Rota, Spain. I had been struggling to adjust to life since moving here, but that evening I felt a sense of home as they spoke with our group. As we attended The Villa, Rick and Paula both took time to ask questions, really listen, and get to know my family. We continued to build relationships during weekly meetings through meals, worship, and conversations. When death and devastation hit our community, they walked through it with us, brought food to the hospital, waited with us, and made food for the families waiting at home. It was a comfort and relief.

When God called me to lead as President for the Protestant Women of the Chapel, I was hesitant. After speaking with Paula, I felt confident that God had indeed given me a vision for leading the women that year, and Paula had a similar desire. She stepped into the role of Vice President of Spiritual Life this year and has been a tremendous help as I've navigated the women's ministry through a difficult year. Although COVID-19 kept us physically apart for a while, we still had 40–50 women studying God's word each week through Zoom meetings and in-person small groups.



Paula with Felicia and Stephanie

Despite things not going as we had planned, this year has been a tremendous year of growth for me and the other women in our community. God placed the burden on me to go straight to His word and study it myself, but I had no idea where to start. When I mentioned this to Paula, she lent me a book called *Women of the Word* by Jen Wilkin. It was an answer to prayer! I learned so much about how to study God's word.

I was excited to dive into the book of Ephesians because it was where our theme for the year came from. I asked Paula if she would consider leading a study by pairing *Women of the Word* with Ephesians. Now I realize this was no small task, but Paula is a gifted teacher. Her graciousness, experience, walk with God, and study of His word have been great blessings to me and our study groups. Studying through a book of the Bible started me on an exciting journey to know God's word more intimately and has given me the confidence to continue. Paula has equipped me to begin leading our small group as well, and I look forward to one day leading on my own.

Rick and Paula have been living examples of true discipleship, investing in the lives of those in our community, helping them grow, and equipping them to do the same for others. We are truly blessed by them and the Cadence ministry for sending families like them to minister to our military community.

So, as we've waited, some days in frustration and others in hope and patience, God faithfully goes about the work of growing his people and provides us with beautiful and unexpected gifts.

Love to you all,
Paula

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—FELICIA



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