

Rev. Carolyn Tatem

[00:00:16] **Don Payne:** Hi friends. Welcome again to Engage 360 at Denver Seminary. My name is Don Payne. I'm one of your hosts and I love introducing you to Denver Seminary students who already have considerable ministry experience that can contribute to all of our learning because of what they're doing or the places they're serving in ministry. So it's a pleasure for me to introduce you to one of our current Master of Divinity students, Reverend Carolyn Tatum. Carolyn, welcome to the podcast.

[00:00:48] **Carolyn Tatem:** Thank you for having me.

[00:00:50] **Don Payne:** Yeah, it's, it's a delight. We look forward to our conversation. Reverend Tatum is Associate Minister at First Baptist Church of Glenarden, Maryland, where we have a campus there. She is also a director of Queen Esther Ministry at First Baptist Church, and that's some ministry that focuses on training and discipling women. She is a full-time middle school teacher as well as being a leader in this ministry at First Baptist Church. Uh, Carolyn has a master of science from AM American University in DC and has a rich background. In education. One other note. She's also the author of five books, okay. The three I know of are Marriage from A to Z marriage from A to Z for singles and Embracing Excellence. What, tell us what are the others?

[00:01:37] **Carolyn Tatem:** So homeschooling from A to Z. Okay. And then I have a workbook that goes along with marriage from A to Z. Mm-hmm.

[00:01:46] **Don Payne:** Know those publications. So, Reverend Carolyn Tatum you have a background in pastoral ministry but tell us a bit about how you ended up in your current roles as associate pastor and director of Queen Esther Ministry there at First Baptist.

[00:01:59] **Carolyn Tatem:** So, I started working in the youth ministry first at First Baptist Church of Lynn Arden. And then after working in the youth ministry I. Some years afterwards, had an interest in serving with the women's ministry and I was asked if I would work alongside as the assistant director to the lady who was going to start Queen Esther. And Queen Esther was named after Esther in the Bible because of her characteristics and just all of the great qualities of Queen Esther, we wanted to be able to instill those qualities in. Women. And so she was starting this program for the very first time and asked me if I would serve as an assistant to her. And I did it for about five or six years. And then the director moved away and asked me if I would be willing to take the lead. And I was like, I'll help whoever you get, but I don't wanna take the lead. I came shaken, not wanting to take on the lead, but really through much prayer and, really spending time with God. I got the answer that this is what God was calling me to do and one of the ways that he spoke to me was just so. Interesting because I prayed and I said, God, would you please confirm that this is you calling me, that this is what you want me to do. And, um, I asked God to show me a sign. So I prayed, I, I fasted. And that particular day I was riding down the street. And, um, there was a car in front of me. It stopped, it had a Washington DC license plate, and it said, Esther.

[00:03:36] **Don Payne:** Oh no. Your destiny was sealed

[00:03:42] **Carolyn Tatem:** It's at that point. God said, you asked me for a sign and I'm calling you to lead the oh my. ministry for such a time as this.

[00:03:51] **Don Payne:** Oh my.

[00:03:52] **Carolyn Tatem:** so, um, I did, I got it just as clear as day that this is what I'm supposed to. To be doing. So, I have been doing it and working with the ministry for 23 years.

[00:04:03] **Don Payne:** What a great story. Yeah. When you see, when you see the license plate, you say, okay, Lord, I get it. I get it. Right..

[00:04:09] **Carolyn Tatem:** Get it. I get it. Yes.

[00:04:11] **Don Payne:** Oh gosh. Tell us a little bit about I. The approach, the discipleship approach that you take in Queen Esther Ministries. I ask that because there's so many different resources and programs available in discipleship. Uh, how do you all approach that? What's the heartbeat of the discipleship angle or objectives that you have?

[00:04:34] **Carolyn Tatem:** So, uh, the Queen Esther Ministry is based on leading women closer to Christ through the women of the Bible. And so Queen Esther's divided into three sessions, and in each session is about 14 or 15 weeks long. So it is a big commitment. We get women to get committed to the journey. We started out as a ministry that met in person. And after the pandemic, we moved to virtual with a few components where we go inside the building from time to time. Uh, but women are studying what Jesus did in the lives of the women of the Bible, and what he is still doing in the life of women today. So the, the mission is to disciple today's woman for tomorrow. So every week there's a different woman for the topic. The lessons are divided into five days. So one of the disciplines that we're teaching women is the need to spend time with God on a day-to-day basis. . And so when they come to the class on Thursday, basically they are discussing the woman of the week, what did Jesus do in her life and how can you connect, how can you relate? What did you get out of the lesson this week? In addition to that, they're memorizing one verse each week from

[00:05:54] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:05:55] **Carolyn Tatem:** So it is through studying the women of the Bible, taking in a verse that you actually personalize and memorize each week. And then the ladies are divided into groups that you're meeting with for your three 15 week sessions.

[00:06:11] **Don Payne:** Okay. I was gonna ask about that because I know First Baptist is a really large church, and I would imagine the Queen Esther Ministries probably involves quite a number of women

[00:06:21] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes. So currently there's about 300 women in the program.

[00:06:26] **Don Payne:** Okay. That's like a medium sized church of its own.

[00:06:29] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes.

[00:06:29] **Don Payne:** if you're doing this mostly virtually, I was gonna ask about how, how do you get the personal component, the uh, the interactive, the feedback component, even a mentoring type component in that with that many people, so you break them down.

[00:06:43] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yeah, so we break them down into groups. There may be like 18 different groups that are in Queen Esther right now. And what happens is, everyone, all the women, whether you're in the session one, the session two or session three, we all meet at the same time .

[00:07:00] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:07:00] **Carolyn Tatem:** Queen Esther opens up with a praise and worship scripture, prayer, and any announcements, and there may be a mini message. That is good for all of the women across the board. And then they zoom into their individual classes you're in a group with other women who are around your same age ladies you can relate to and you're meeting on a week to week basis with that same group of ladies. So in addition to you growing and your learning more about Christ and what Jesus did in the life of women, you're developing a sisterhood and just

[00:07:34] **Don Payne:** Great. Yeah.

[00:07:36] **Carolyn Tatem:** family, uh, connection that you're meeting with. And so that is on Zoom, but every now and then we have components where you go into the church, like there's an in-person night. And on that in-person night, you get to see all the ladies that are local. Since the pandemic, the ministry has grown where we're no longer just servicing women in the DMV

[00:08:01] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:08:02] **Carolyn Tatem:** we, we have a lady that zooms in from Malaysia.

[00:08:06] **Don Payne:** That's remarkable.

[00:08:08] **Carolyn Tatem:** and so, so that opened up women all across the world

[00:08:12] **Don Payne:** Yeah.

[00:08:13] **Carolyn Tatem:** that, you know, which is a wonderful thing. So on occasions we've had ladies outside of the state, like in Atlanta or in South Carolina, they fly in for that in-person night or that in-person weekend.

[00:08:26] **Don Payne:** Well, that speaks to how meaningful it is to them if they're willing to do that.

[00:08:29] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes. Yes. And and you know, at the end of the program there's a big graduation, which is combined with the church's discipleship, graduation,

[00:08:38] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:08:39] **Carolyn Tatem:** And so ladies will fly in for that graduation if they've been taking Queen Esther out. State. ' cause

[00:08:46] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:08:46] **Carolyn Tatem:** that's the first time they get to see each other for some in

[00:08:49] **Don Payne:** Yeah. Yeah, that's huge. Now, from a director's vantage point, you, you probably see the big picture very well, but you know, sometimes I know it can, the larger the number, the more difficult it can be to have, personal contact with people. But I'm curious what kinds of life change have you seen? How do you have a story for us of how you've seen God change women's lives through this process?

[00:09:16] **Carolyn Tatem:** Oh, yes. I mean, I've seen, matter of fact, the young lady that serves as my assistant I saw her when she came through Queen Nester. She was in my first class. And, barely even talked or said much, came to the class, was assigned with this group of ladies. I saw her grow in her walk with God. I've seen her grow and just how she relates to other women and, um, she would never say one word. And now this young lady is serving as my assistant director, gets up and gets the ladies going for the ministry. , Just have seen the growth. In the lives of many different women, I've

Wow.

women who come in who for whatever reason, they don't have a good relationship. They've never experienced a good relationship with other women, you know, because of previous hurts but then they come in and they develop a family, they develop a sisterhood. So just to see their lives change through having that encounter with Jesus. As well as the sisterhood, um, that they developed through going through has been just amazing to be able to see the differences. For some, you see it in their outward appearance, right? Some who come in maybe working through

depression or just not even being at a state where you can be happy with the, where God has you. but seeing them get in contact with, the whole discipline of spending daily time with Jesus, you know, seeing God come in and transform their lives really just has been amazing

[00:10:55] **Don Payne:** I love how you've emphasized several times the sisterhood, because the relationships that are formed there are part of what at the seminary we call the hidden curriculum they, they, they study a formal written curriculum, but there's that hidden curriculum that is just as formation, isn't it? Just as healing as what they're studying cognitively.

[00:11:17] **Carolyn Tatem:** Oh, yes. Oh yes. And in the program, one of the things that helps make it successful is they are, they are given an accountability partner.

[00:11:27] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:11:27] **Carolyn Tatem:** Um, and so when you come in, you, there's somebody else that you're paired with, and that becomes the person that you're get, you get the closest with. That's in your class. So your assignment with your accountability partner is to check in at least once a week. Ask, did you do your scripture? Have you done your lesson? And then we pray together. And

[00:11:48] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:11:49] **Carolyn Tatem:** you don't feel like if there's a class of 20 women and you haven't been able to connect with all 20, but at least you know that each week you're gonna connect with at least that one. That's your accountability partner that's gonna be with you on that journey.

[00:12:02] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:12:03] **Carolyn Tatem:** so, um, so, you know, we, we look out for each other in that sense of having accountability.

[00:12:09] **Don Payne:** Okay. Now here's something that I think anybody who's worked in the arena of discipleship ministries can relate to the challenges. What, what are some of the biggest challenges that you have faced or continue to face in discipling women? Uh, or, or the biggest challenges that the women tend to face in their spiritual growth?

[00:12:29] **Carolyn Tatem:** I think some of the challenges today, first is the, the busyness of life and within itself, right? Being able to be committed to a program that is for three sessions and 15 weeks and meets every single Thursday from

[00:12:45] **Don Payne:** Yeah. That,

[00:12:45] **Carolyn Tatem:** to nine, like.

[00:12:46] **Don Payne:** yeah, that's a, that's a big ask with busy people.

[00:12:48] **Carolyn Tatem:** is a big ask. And so, you know, if you're married, we ask you to ask your husband, your family, are they okay with you making this commitment? If you have children do, were you gonna have childcare on that night so that you can really focus in on, this journey. And, um, so it could be childcare, it could be the, the actual commitment of being able to be committed for three 15 week sessions.

[00:13:13] **Don Payne:** Hmm. Mm-hmm.

[00:13:14] **Carolyn Tatem:** And so sometimes there are other things where women are just not, some women have not experienced healthy female relationships,

[00:13:24] **Don Payne:** Okay, so are they res, how, how do they react to that? Are they resistant? Are they fearful? Suspicious?

[00:13:31] **Carolyn Tatem:** are fearful, some are suspicious, like. Just to be in this group with these ladies

[00:13:38] **Don Payne:** Hmm.

[00:13:38] **Carolyn Tatem:** after week is, and does it cost anything? Is it, is it gonna be, you know, they want to know, like, you know, does it cost money? You mean I'm gonna be, you're gonna help me week after week? And this is all free.

[00:13:51] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:13:52] **Carolyn Tatem:** for some people, that is.

[00:13:54] **Don Payne:** yeah. Nothing else in their life works that way. Right.

[00:13:56] **Carolyn Tatem:** Right, right. And it is like, the facilitators each one of the groups are assigned to a facilitator and an assistant, and 99% of the facilitators, they have already gone through Queen Ester themselves. I.

[00:14:11] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:14:11] **Carolyn Tatem:** So they know what the commitment is like, and they come back to help serve these women as they go through the ministry. So, you know, it's like you've, God helped you to get through. Now you come back and serve and help another group of ladies to get through the discipleship process that we had.

[00:14:28] **Don Payne:** I like that. Now, Carolyn, you've been at this for a long time now you've seen a lot, you've probably experimented with a number of things and learned from trial and error along the way, but I'm curious how your. How your understanding of discipleship in general has grown or deepened or changed over the years?

[00:14:48] **Carolyn Tatem:** yes. Discipleship begins with relationships. And being able to connect with people over the course of years. One of the things that has helped make Queen Esther effective and to be able to grow is developing relationships with women. when you know, you have a relationship with it makes it even easier for you to go into talking about Jesus. Right. And sharing the love of Christ with these ladies. And, um, you know, I might not know each one of them personally, but I get to greet them when they come into general assembly. You know, my face is usually the face that they're seeing once we get started in general assembly. And, um, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

[00:15:33] **Don Payne:** Right.

[00:15:34] **Carolyn Tatem:** And so it is. The love of Christ. It is all of that that helps to draw the ladies and keep them coming. Although the word of God is great, you know, it has to be more to keep women coming week after week . They need to see the love of Christ. They need to see it in action, and I think in doing that consistently, week after week. The women are consistently coming and, and the ministry just keeps re evolving because after you finish session one, two, and three, then you finish. Then we start all over with bringing in a new group of women

[00:16:10] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:16:11] **Carolyn Tatem:** in and the ministry sells itself because of the change that people see in the women that they know. Those women go into their workplace, they go into their schools, they go into their homes, their family members see what Jesus is doing in their lives, and that's what sells Queen Esther. You know, people are saying, what? What's going on with you? You know what is changing? They see the change in the women, and that's how we get more and more women to sign up because they see the differences in the people they know.

[00:16:42] **Don Payne:** Now, does that indicate that many of the women are not members or regular attenders at First Baptist? Are they, is it almost a community appeal?

[00:16:51] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes it is. Some are members of First Baptist Church of Glen Arden. Some are members of other churches in the DMV. And oftentimes if you meet somebody or you tell somebody on your job, I've heard people say, I was in the bank and somebody told me about Queen

[00:17:09] **Don Payne:** Oh yeah.

[00:17:10] **Carolyn Tatem:** was on the bus and somebody told me about Queen Esther.

Some different stories about how women have found out about it, and it's just been amazing. You know how they come into the ministry?

[00:17:22] **Don Payne:** Now back on the relational piece, you, you mentioned how significant that is. Has that emphasis always been what it is today, or did you have to kind of grow into that more along the way from what you learned? I.

[00:17:35] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yeah, I, I think the relationship piece has always been important, but I think now that we're virtual, we have to work even harder

[00:17:42] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:17:43] **Carolyn Tatem:** maintain those relationships, to reach out to people. We have something that we develop, we call it Sit with Your Sister Sunday. I. And so we'll pick a Sunday and we'll just announce it to the Queen Esther Ministry and everybody comes and sit at that particular service. 'Cause you know, there are the three different services at First Baptist. So if we pick 10 o'clock on Sunday and we announce it to the Queen Esther Ministry, all the ladies of Queen Esther come out to that 10 o'clock service.

[00:18:15] **Don Payne:** Oh, great.

[00:18:16] **Carolyn Tatem:** get to sit with the Sisters of Queen Esther ministry. And so just doing things like that from time to time to build relationships to see the ladies in person, those are the kind of things that help make ladies stick.

[00:18:31] **Don Payne:** Yeah. You know that that's a really important point, but that, that you have to work. So much harder at it. You have to be so much more intentional about the relational aspect.

[00:18:40] **Carolyn Tatem:** yes.

[00:18:40] **Don Payne:** but it doesn't happen quite as naturally. But I think the point is that, that it can happen even virtually. Those relationships can be built even if you have to be a lot more deliberate and thoughtful about doing it.

[00:18:52] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes, yes indeed. Because we were used to coming in person every week, and not having that component we have to work harder, you know, that means you make some phone calls. That means you might meet for lunch or you might meet to have a cup of coffee. You're trying to make connection outside of just the screen for those that you can reach out to. And I, we've had some groups that took a group, group trip. Like they had

a sister in that lived in Atlanta and they took a girls trip and they got their flights and they, it was at least seven or eight of them, they flew out to Atlanta because

[00:19:27] **Don Payne:** Yeah.

[00:19:28] **Carolyn Tatem:** girl in their class in Atlanta. So, you know, being intentional about connecting and building those relationships is really what makes it success.

[00:19:37] **Don Payne:** Yeah, the payoff is huge and, and the discipleship impact is, uh, is rich. Rich.

[00:19:43] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes.

[00:19:44] **Don Payne:** Okay. Uh, Carolyn, you're a Denver seminary student. You're in the m diff program, majoring in pastoral care and counseling. Make some connections for us. How, how have, have your studies at seminary informed your work in your ministry?

[00:19:57] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes. So, so as you know, I have, one of my books is Marriage from A to

[00:20:02] **Don Payne:** Mm-hmm.

[00:20:03] **Carolyn Tatem:** And so that's one of my passions outside of working in ministry to women is working with couples So Denver Seminary has been so instrumental in helping me in ministry as well as even the work that I do even in the school. It has been a win-win situation. I've been taking the mentoring classes.

[00:20:24] **Don Payne:** Mm-hmm.

[00:20:25] **Carolyn Tatem:** And the mentoring classes help you to take a look at you, your character and character that you need to build upon, as well as you get to walk alongside someone who agrees to be your mentor while you're in the program. I. That, that whole process just really has been a blessing to me because I was able to find someone in ministry that, you know, she has allowed me to walk alongside her. So that experience alone, I would not have had if it wasn't for being connected in the Denver Seminary program. Uh, and she, even though I finished a mentoring class. We're still connected. We

[00:21:01] **Don Payne:** Oh, that's great.

[00:21:02] **Carolyn Tatem:** The relationship has continued. And then I've been taking classes in pastoral cares and counseling. Each class that I have or that I've taken helps me to be a better leader when it comes to working with the women of Queen Ether, as well as working with couples because it's all about how to care for your people. Right and counseling. So I've been able to pull from the classes that I've been learning and directly apply it to the ministry work that I do, which has been so rewarding. 'cause oftentimes, you know, you some people are in seminary and they're learning with a desire to become. pastor or desire to become a women's pastor or what have you. In my case, I'm already in that role and everything that I get, I'm able to directly relate it and connect it to the ministry work that I'm currently doing,

[00:21:57] **Don Payne:** Well, that's, that's ideal. Yeah. That, that's ideal. You and I were talking about that just briefly before we started recording how it's it's the ministry experience that gives you. So many more places for immediate connections with what you're doing and that that really is ideal. Even though going through seminary after years of ministry experience and with a, an already very busy life is not the easiest thing in the world. But you, you can get so much more out of it. And I wanna commend you as well for what you said about the mentoring process. Because for somebody who's a highly experienced leader in ministry already, it can be very difficult in a number of ways to have somebody then come into your life as a mentor and to walk alongside you and to keep that, that lifelong growth component very fresh and vibrant.

[00:22:48] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes. I yeah. A wonderful component of the program and I love being able to connect with somebody else. You know, that has already been there. That's further down the road than I am that I can learn from and just observe. I love that piece. I also like having the different character traits to focus on and to look within, because oftentimes people in ministry, they, they have their issues and they have their things. They may not last. If nobody ever works with them on their issues,

[00:23:20] **Don Payne:** Yep.

[00:23:21] **Carolyn Tatem:** Helping other people.

[00:23:22] **Don Payne:** Yep.

[00:23:23] **Carolyn Tatem:** what about taking a look within, well, the mentoring program forced me to take a look within and see where some of my strengths and some of my weaknesses,

[00:23:31] **Don Payne:** Okay.

[00:23:31] **Carolyn Tatem:** of the areas that I know I need to work on, or I need to have accountability in that area of my life. And so I appreciate that because that's helping me to work on me,

[00:23:43] **Don Payne:** Yeah.

[00:23:43] **Carolyn Tatem:** know? And

[00:23:44] **Don Payne:** I'm glad you Yeah.

[00:23:45] **Carolyn Tatem:** The fact that the mentoring classes do that. And in addition to that, there are times where I get to preach and teach at the church. And I think I'm able to preach and teach at a better level of confidence maybe. Because of the classes and the things that I'm learning you know, I feel like I can put a sermon together better than I did when I first started.

[00:24:08] **Don Payne:** The people you're preaching to are, are glad of that as well, aren't they?

[00:24:11] **Carolyn Tatem:** Yes, yes. And I will say I am a teacher. I absolutely love teaching. but when it comes down to preaching and declaring the gospel, I wanna be able to declare it, um, in a way where, I can maximize that for the people to get to, to hear Jesus, to see Jesus, to be able to make that as clear as I can. I feel like I'm able to do a better job of it because of the classes that I've had through

[00:24:38] **Don Payne:** Oh, good. Good. That's, that's so good to hear. Uh, Carolyn tell us again about your books for listeners.

[00:24:44] **Carolyn Tatem:** So homeschooling from A to Z I had a season of homeschooling my own children and wrote that book to help. Other moms or dads for that matter who have a season of home schooling. And then marriage from A to Z is just principles on how to build a Christian marriage. Book and then there's the workbook. And then I developed a workbook marriage from A to Z for singles for people who are preparing for marriage. And then one year our church did a fast and we wanted to have a devotional book. And I wrote a devotion on the Proverb 31 woman called Embracing Excellence, which just takes you day by day through the chapter of Proverbs 31.

[00:25:29] **Don Payne:** Okay. Good. Good. Well, Reverend Carolyn Tatum, such a pleasure to have you spend some time with us. and Friends, we're really grateful. As always for the time you've taken to, to be with us here at a Gauge 360. So thanks for your time. Thanks for your interest, for your support, your prayers, and until next time, we hope the Lord blesses you. Take care.