

House Group Notes

14th March 2017



Ichthus Values, Characteristics & Distinctives Session 6:

This week we will be focusing on: Inclusivity – Race, Age & Gender

As part of our look at Ichthus' values, characteristics & distinctives (what makes us unique) we have moved on from the group of three values consisting of love, Spirit-led humility & an evangelistic heart. The next group of three is inclusivity consisting of race, age & gender. This time, instead of looking at them separately, we're going to cover all three in one session... We hope!!

Read out the statement below taken from Ichthus' website:

Paul states that in Christ there is 'neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male and female'. We seek to see all people as persons of equal worth and potential, seeking to involve all without discrimination of race, age and gender. We aim to be inclusive.

This is our heart at Lee Green. We aim to be inclusive and believe that anyone can serve the Lord and be used by Him. Paul's statement mentioned above is taken from Galatians 3:28. This is a fantastic summary of what we believe, read it in context:

[Read Galatians 3:26-29](#)

Discuss:

Why do you think Paul calls us all sons yet goes on to talk about us being "neither male or female"? Culturally the sons typically got the inheritance and daughters got nothing. Paul is saying we all have the status of sons no matter who you are, and we all gain an inheritance through Jesus, note verse 29.

Sometimes we tag "economic status" on when we talk about inclusivity and this is also covered by Paul's statement. Slaves have nothing and are even owned by someone else, yet they have equal status with their master in Jesus' eyes. These four values of inclusivity can be used to form the acronym RAGE and we sometimes mention it on Sundays:

R – Race A – Age G – Gender E – Economic status

Race

Often in the bible you will see the word "Gentiles", which was a Jewish word for people who weren't Jewish. Israel was a nation chosen by God to bring about His will, but sometimes the Israelites/Jews became insular. This was not God's heart, Isaiah 49:6 says:

The Lord said to me, "I have a greater task for you, my servant. Not only will you restore to greatness the people of Israel who have survived, but I will also make you a light to the nations so that all the world may be saved."

Jesus instructed His disciples to go and make more disciples from every nation (Matt 28:19-20). The apostle Paul says that he was called by God to go to the Gentiles so that they too can be saved (Eph 3:8).

It's clear God loves all people from every nation and wants them all to know Him. God longs for the day when all people will worship Him.

Read Revelation 7:9-12, which is a picture of what things will be like one day.

Age

Read Genesis 17:1-8

Abraham was used by God aged 99 and beyond. In fact, when God made these promises to him, he hadn't even had a son yet to begin his many descendants, and make him a "father of many nations" as God promised – that was still to come!. Several Ichthus leaders are still going strong in their 80s!

Jesus says, "Permit the children to come to me" (Mark 10:14) and unlike any other religious or philosophical leader, he has a real love for children. God will also use children for his wonderful work too.

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel is thought to be roughly 12 years old when the Lord speaks to him and gives him a prophetic word to bring. It doesn't matter what age you are, God loves you and has a plan for you. If you are willing, He will use you.

Gender

The ancient Jewish culture was very male dominated, as indeed were most civilisations and cultures until relatively recently in history. Sadly there are many church groups today that don't allow women to preach or lead churches. However, we don't believe this is God's will, and this misguided belief is the result of one or two poorly interpreted verses from the Bible.

If we look again at Paul's statement from Galatians 3:28, he states that there are neither male or female, and that we are all one in Christ Jesus. Essentially, this just means it doesn't matter what our gender is, we are the same in Jesus. Jesus himself had many female followers and He first appeared to women after His death. Finally, although outnumbered by men, throughout the Old and New Testament there are women who serve God and lead others in many incredible ways.

Can you name any women who lead others and serve the Lord today? What about in the Bible?

- Jackie Pullinger, Faith Forster, Debbie Laycock, Abi Willets, Heidi Baker, etc.
- Miriam: lead Israel with Moses – Micah 6:4
- Deborah: prophet, judge and leader - Judges 4:4
- Huldah: prophet – 2 kings 22:14
- Phoebe: servant/minister – Romans 16:1-2
- Junia: an apostle – Romans 16:7

If you'd like to look further into this topic please refer to the book "Women and the Kingdom" by Faith & Roger Forster.

Discuss the following questions:

- Does Lee Green represent and release people of all races, ages, genders and economic status?
- Do we proportionally represent the different people found in our local area?

Pray for an increasing love of people from all backgrounds, nations, ages and genders, and that we will ALL seek to see ALL people released into God's plans for their lives.