

# House Group Notes

25<sup>th</sup> July 2017



## Ichthus Values, Characteristics & Distinctives Session 18:

### Distinctives: What Makes Ichthus Unique

#### Part 3 of 7: Women in Leadership

##### Introduction

We are currently looking at things that make Ichthus unique. This is not to say that other churches do not hold these values, as many do, but it is the combination of these values all held together at the core of Ichthus that makes us unique. This week we are looking at the role of women in church.

Many churches have women in leadership, but often this is a relatively new thing because of a desire to be inclusive and reflect the 21st Century values of striving for equality across the genders. However, Ichthus hold this value not from a desire to be progressive and keep up with the times, but because we believe it is a Biblical principle! This is not a new thing - the Bible has always been inclusive, and women have always been in leadership amongst God's people throughout radical church history (as distinct from established church history!) and Biblical history.

In Ichthus, we believe that there is no gender discrimination between the roles that men and women hold in the church.

**For anyone interested in a more in-depth and complete study, we highly recommend reading Faith & Roger's book "Women & the Kingdom" in full. The material below comes from their teaching.**

##### **READ: Galatians 3:27-28**

In the kingdom of God, there is no room for discrimination based on race (neither Jew nor Greek), class (neither slave nor free) or gender (not male and female). This is very clear here! However, there has been a huge amount of controversy and division over the role of women in the church. In this session, we will focus on how Jesus treats women, and briefly look at three "problem passages" that have often been wrongly applied to restrict women in the church.

##### Jesus & women

There is a real balance of male and female examples in Jesus' parables, and in his interactions with men & women. How many can you think of?! (e.g. the lost sheep & the lost coin, the man with the mustard seed & the women with the leaven, meeting Nicodemus & meeting the women at the well, etc).

What do you notice about the way that Jesus interacts with these women in the following example passages? How does He affirm them?

##### **READ:**

- **Luke 11:27-28** (doesn't rebuke her, but redefines the role of women as hearing and following as disciples)
- **Luke 8:43-48** (encourages her to speak publicly, gets her to testify, calls her daughter, attributes her healing to her own faith)
- **Luke 10:38-42** (being a disciple is ultimately more important than the domestic role, more important to learn than to serve, Mary's choice is praised)

## **Paul's teaching on women**

**(n.b. there won't be time to look up these verses, just included for reference!)**

Paul referred to women as apostles (Rom 17:7), ministers (Rom 16:1-2), fellow workers (Rom 16:3-5), church leaders (Col 4:15), prophets and pray-ers (1 Cor 11) and equal partners (Gal 3:28). If Paul seems to contradict himself at times, or contradict what Jesus said and did, then we have misunderstood Paul - he must be understood in the light of what Jesus taught in the Gospels. Remember we are Christo-centric, just as Paul was!!

### **What about the "problem" passages then?**

**For a full study on 1 Cor 11:1-16, 1 Cor 14:34-40 & 1 Timothy 2:9-15, we encourage you to read Faith & Roger's book (if you would like to borrow a copy, or have a copy of the relevant chapters, ask Caz or Joel).**

There are three issues that come up here - hair/clothing, silence, and teaching/leading. In all of these passages, we must remember that Paul was addressing specific issues in specific contexts. When understood properly, they are actually encouragements for women to participate publicly in church, in a way that is well-ordered and not chaotic.

In summary, here is how we handle these issues in practice in Ichthus:

- Issue 1: Hair/clothing - should women cover their hair at church or style it in a particular way? Are all men the "head" over all women?

Short answer: NO - these seemingly harsh instructions are easily understood by looking at the metaphorical use of language, and particular issues in the specific churches that Paul was writing to, to do with their own cultural context and keeping good order in the church. Paul's advice is for women to dress appropriately and modestly.

- Issue 2: Silence - should women keep totally silent at church???

Short answer: NO - Women at that time were mostly uneducated, so it seems now that they were included in the learning at church, they would interrupt and ask a lot of questions which was disruptive! So Paul recommends that they just listen for now, and ask questions in private rather than stopping the flow of the teaching. Sometimes the word for "speak" in these passages literally means "chatter" - Paul is asking the women to pay attention and learn because the teaching is as much for them as it is for the men, so they should try hard to learn and understand, not chat away to their friends when they didn't get it!

- Issue 3: Can women teach/ preach in churches? Can they be in leadership/authority over men?

Short answer: YES - In Jewish law (the Talmud, not Biblical Jewish law), women were not allowed to learn in the synagogues. Jesus and Paul broke down that inequality wonderfully!! But it meant that Jewish women were generally very "behind" in their understanding of scripture. For this reason, in this context, it was just wise and sensible that they didn't teach yet in case they taught wrongly. Paul's advice is that women should take the opportunity to learn and receive from others in a quiet and submissive spirit.

### **Pray to finish:**

- For everyone at Lee Green to be released to fulfil their potential and gifting in Christ, regardless of their gender, race or class
- For us all to grow in understanding of the Bible

- For healing from any hurtful experiences people may have had to do with discrimination