

The logo for CPAS, consisting of the letters 'c', 'p', 'a', and 's' in a stylized, lowercase font. The 'c' and 'p' are connected, and the 'a' and 's' are also connected. The logo is white and set against a dark blue background that forms a vertical bar on the left side of the page.

cpas

A photograph of a single, large, leafy green tree standing in the middle of a vast, flat field. The field is covered in dry, reddish-brown grass, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The horizon is visible in the distance.

women in mind

Three sessions on
women and leadership

Rosie Ward

- Bible background and history
- Leadership and style
- Issues and action - what next?

Leaders' notes for mixed groups

women in mind

Leaders' notes



Women in Mind promotes discussion on the topic of women in leadership. In addition, it will invite you to consider how you can encourage and affirm women as leaders in your church or 'ministry context'.

You will need

Participants will need two books:

- the Bible
- *Growing Women Leaders* (CPAS/BRF)

The sessions are based on the main topics of *Growing Women Leaders*, inviting consideration of their implications, and application of them to your own local-church situation.

It's a fairly long, wide-ranging book and these three sessions can only cover some of the areas included in it. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter could provide material for further sessions.

Group dynamics

The three-session course is designed for groups including both men and women. (There is a linked course for groups of women.)

An ideal group size is 4-8 people; it would work with a larger group if you split into sub-groups for some of the activities. Each session is designed to last about 90 minutes, including a short time of prayer at the end of sessions 2 and 3 – but you may want to allow more time than this.

As leader you will need to consider the dynamics of the group; while you can't foresee how the discussion may go, it is probably best not to invite people who may clash unhelpfully with one another.

Translation

In some places the Bible translation used will make a difference to interpretation. Please ensure you are using either the *New Revised Standard Version* or *Today's New International Version*, even if others bring their own Bibles that use other translations.

If the topic of translation becomes an issue, you may want to add a separate session, perhaps based on the 'Inclusive Language Bibles' discussion paper, downloadable from the CPAS website. On the CPAS home page, click on 'Growing women leaders', then 'articles', and scroll through 'previous articles' to November 2006: 'Inclusive Language Bibles'. Or simply click [here](#).

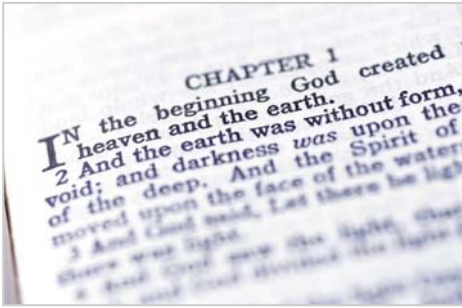
Preparing to lead

- Pray for your preparation and for the participants.
- Read the relevant sections of *Growing Women Leaders* and think through the questions for the session.
- As you lead, be ready to decide how far to stick to the suggested outline and how far to go with people's questions, struggles and issues.
- Ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute, and that the discussion is not dominated by the more vocal participants.
- Choose a way of concluding, for example with prayer, which is appropriate for the group.

Unless otherwise indicated, page numbers refer to *Growing Women Leaders*.

women in mind

Session 1: Bible background and history



Aim

To explore the context of women and leadership and to consider some linked ideas and assumptions

To look at the scriptural case for women leaders in the Church

To highlight biblical and historical roles models for women leaders

Preparation

Read Chapter 1 of *Growing Women Leaders*, 'Interpreting Scripture'.

Way in (30 mins)

You will need: a selection of photos, pictures and stories about contemporary women leaders.

Divide the participants into groups of three or four. Invite them to look at the materials and think about what they communicate about women leaders. Give the groups 10 minutes to discuss these images and stories in the light of their own experience and understanding of women leaders.

Then ask for brief feedback, and lead into a discussion about how our assumptions and experiences colour our views on this issue – and on others. Try to draw out the effects of parental example, of role models, positive or negative experiences of women leaders inside and outside the church. Consider, too, the effects of what we have been taught in church about women as leaders.

Or

Give each participant up to five minutes (depending on group size) to share something of their experience and understanding about women as leaders in the Church. At the end, try to draw some threads together about the way different people and experiences have influenced us – as above.

Bible (30 mins)

Divide into pairs or small groups to discuss some or all of the following questions:

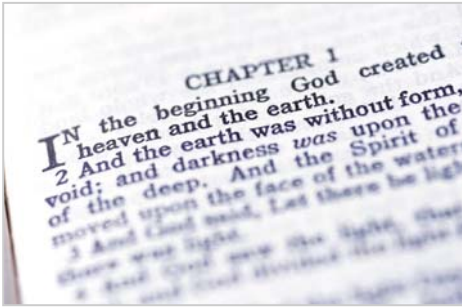
- How do you interpret the creation order? Do you think that the subordination of women is a result of the Fall, or a divinely ordained mark of difference in roles between men and women? (p 44-8)
- What evidence is there to suggest that Jesus affirmed women as equals in discipleship? (p 56-7)
- Look at Acts 2:17-18. What significance do you think this passage has in the debate about women's public ministry? (p 58)
- Did Paul have female co-workers? If so, what sort of roles did they fulfil? (p 26, 58-62)
- Do you think it matters whether Junia was a man or a woman? Why? (p 59-60)

NB The choice of Bible translation will may make a difference in the discussions about Paul's co-workers and Junia (and in other places), so it would help to be aware of the assumptions linked to the choice of words in these translations.

Allow 15 minutes for discussion. Then ask for brief feedback from each group.

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Session 1: Bible background and history



Explore (15 mins)

This section draws together some threads from the biblical material. If time allows, this provides an ideal opportunity to focus briefly on women in church history.

Introduce this section with the following statement (p64) from a recent in-depth study of women in the early church:

'What can be said with certainty is that the claim that women have never functioned as presbyters in the "orthodox" church is simply untrue.' (*Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*, Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek (ed), Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005)

Ask members of the group if, having looked at the Bible, they agree with this (modest?) conclusion. If so, what implications might this have for them as individuals, and for the church?

Introduce the names of half a dozen women leaders from Chapter 3; for example: Paula; Hilda; Margaret Fell; Selina, Countess of Huntingdon; Catherine Booth; Ellen Ranyard.

Ask a few questions to gauge how well-known (or otherwise) these women are to the group members. How much do they know, and where did they learn about them? Then ask something like: How might knowing more about women leaders in the past help us today as we explore women's leadership in the Church?

So what? (15 mins)

You may want to focus conversation around these questions:

- What implications can we draw from our look at Scripture, which might affect our attitude to women leaders in our church?
- Is our church's policy on women as leaders consistent with its theology? In what ways is it inconsistent?

End with prayer, in whatever way feels appropriate.

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Session 2: Leadership and style



Aim

To explore whether men and women lead differently, and to consider the implications such differences may have for women leaders in the church

Preparation

Read Chapter 5, 'Do women lead differently?'

Before looking at gender stereotypes, this session looks again at Scripture to see if there are signs that leadership gifts are given only to men

Way in (15 mins)

Ask: Who or what comes to mind when you think about the word 'leader'? Discuss this briefly. Why not begin with an activity to help people focus? Prepare a selection of magazines and newspapers and invite participants to select images that, for them, express the word 'leader'.

Why do we often have particular kinds of people in mind when we think about leadership, particularly leadership in the Church?

You may need to make the point that some people associate 'leader' with 'male'. Note how it's relatively recently that we have begun to think about women as leaders, both in society and in the church. For 2000 years, leadership has been male, with some notable exceptions. Think about women in politics – there are now a number of high-profile women. Or if one thinks about race as a parallel issue (leader = white male), one might consider how it is only recently that the USA has become ready for an African-American president.

Bible (20 mins)

Who comes to mind when we think about leadership in a biblical perspective? There is often a tendency to think of figures from the Old Testament such as Moses, David, Nehemiah. What about women – for example, Deborah (Judges 4) or Esther? And what about the New Testament? If names such as Priscilla (Acts 18:18; Romans 16:3-4) and Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) are not suggested, you may want to add them.

Depending on the group, look at a couple of the following passages:

- Acts 2:17-18 (again) – sons and daughters, men and women
- Ephesians 4:7-11 – are these gifts gender-biased?
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 – and these?
- Galatians 5:22-25 – and could you ask the same question about the fruit of the Spirit?

Explore (40 mins)

Introduce some popular assumptions that have become shorthand for male-female stereotypes. For example:

- Men don't ask for directions, women can't read maps
- Men are more logical than women
- Women have higher 'emotional intelligence' than men
- Women share their feelings with their female friends – men rarely discuss their feelings with male friends
- Men make a fuss when they are ill – women don't
- Men can't multi-task
- 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus'.

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Session 2: Leadership and style



Brainstorm for more stereotypes about 'male' and 'female' ways of behaving.

- How true are these in reality?
- What exceptions can you think of?

Then think of some stereotyped views of how men and women might lead. Again, look at each and ask how true it is.

Ask each person to reflect on one woman leader they know in a secular context – either personally known, or in politics, sport or business etc. What does this add to the discussion?

- Is there anything about women which might make them less suited to leadership in church?
- In what ways might women be *more* suited to leadership than men?

Issues you may want to add to the discussion:

- The importance of emotional intelligence in leadership (see p117).
- The extent to which stereotypes are culturally determined. One example is that in 1918 pink was a boys' colour, while our culture has recently tied it firmly to girls and women. (p117-122)
- When women first moved into leadership positions, they often tried to act 'like men' (think of Margaret Thatcher), but now research suggests that no one personality or character type is more effective as a leader – leaders come in all shapes and sizes.
- In recent studies of leadership effectiveness, women are rated at least as effective as men, and the evidence for gender difference is thin (Deborah Rhode, 'The Difference "Difference" Makes', *Leadership*, Fall 2001).
- While women leaders tend to be more democratic and relational, differences in leadership are now acknowledged to have more to do with personality than with gender (p129-130).

At the end of this section, try to summarise the group's conclusions.

In conclusion

Depending on how this session has gone, you may want to encourage the group to share any 'ah-ha moments' – new insights they have gained.

And pray together as appropriate, for example for women leaders and emerging leaders in your church, for the group in its learning together and influence on others.

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Session 3: Issues and action - what next?



Aim

To explore what the church can or should do to develop women as leaders

Preparation

Read Chapter 8, 'Stepping up to lead'.

Way in (15 mins)

Discuss some of the following questions, as appropriate:

- In what ways does our church provide a good context for women to develop as leaders?
- What difficulties can face emerging women leaders in our context?
- What should change for these difficulties to be overcome?
- Who else in our context wants to see women develop as leaders?

Explore (50 mins)

Page 177 suggests that modelling and mentoring are two key ways of creating an atmosphere where women's leadership will be more fully accepted. Use the following headings as a way of focusing on possible actions in your church context:

Modelling (p177)

- Do we use inclusive-language Bibles? If not, would it be possible to change? (Readings from TNIV can easily be selected from www.biblegateway.com and used in weekly service sheets and so on.)
- Do sermons, Bible studies, etc, use examples of biblical and contemporary female leaders as well as male leaders? How could we encourage this?
- Do women and girls see women in leadership roles in the church – for example as clergy, other staff, churchwardens, PCC, group leaders, etc? (Some patterns where women are given certain defined leadership roles can suggest that women are excluded from some other roles.)

Mentoring (p177,195f and 212-13)

- What is mentoring? Is mentoring already happening in our situation?
- How might mentoring help women and girls who have leadership gifts? (There is an article, 'Mentoring for Women Leaders' on the CPAS site: go to 'Growing Women Leaders', then 'articles' and scroll down to the March 2007 article, or click [here](#) for the link.) We also recommend Ruth Hassall's *Growing Young Leaders* (CPAS).
- Who might mentor them? Note that you might find suitable mentors outside the church as well as within it.

As leader you may want to think in advance about other issues in your own context, and focus some of the discussion around those, picking up from the 'Way In' discussion.

In conclusion (15 mins)

- What changes are we going to make in our church so that girls and women receive the message that women can be leaders?
- Who can we identify as a current or emerging leader?

Prayer (10 mins)

End with a time of prayer for one another in the light of the issues you have been discussing.