

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 dry or autumnal season. 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 for women leaders

Leaders' notes for women-only groups

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## Leaders' notes



For whom is *Women in Mind* designed? It could be used with a group of ordained women, or with a group of current and emerging leaders in one church. Or a group of young women who are beginning to move into leadership roles. Or any combination of these!

### You will need

Participants will need two books:

- the Bible (*New Revised Standard Version* or *Today's New International Version*)
- *Growing Women Leaders* (CPAS/BRF)

The sessions are based on the main topics of *Growing Women Leaders*, inviting consideration of their implications, and to encourage group members to support one another as they step forward in leadership.

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

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.

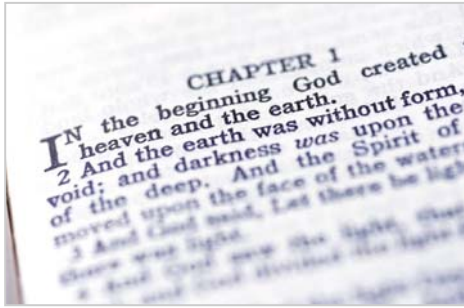
### Preparing to lead

- 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*.

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## Session 1: Bible background and history



### Aim

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

To affirm the biblical basis for women leaders

To highlight biblical and historical role 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 women leaders today.

In groups of three or four, look at this material and think about what it says about women leaders. For example, are there common features in terms of age, dress, areas of leadership (eg politics), and so on?

Invite each group to communicate its thoughts and findings to the wider group in whatever way they wish.

Then discuss what assumptions and previous understanding they bring to this issue; or consider the question of what it means to be a 'leader'.

### Or

Invite each person to spend a few minutes thinking of key moments in their journey as a leader. Then give them up to five minutes (depending on group size) to share something of their experience as a woman who is a leader.

### Bible (45 mins)

Start with a quick read of a number of verses, each person reading a different passage.

Genesis 1:26-27

Acts 2:17-18

Exodus 15:19-23

Acts 8:3

Judges 4:4-5

Acts 18:18-19; 24-26

2 Chronicles 43:22-24

Galatians 3:28

Luke 1:38

Romans 16:1-4; 7, 12

Luke 8:1-3

Philippians 4:2-3

Luke 10:38-42

Discuss your responses to hearing these read aloud.

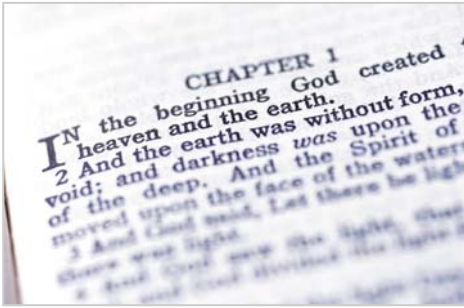
Try to imagine you had never heard the following, so-called 'difficult' passages about women's ministry – 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. What conclusions might you draw about women's leadership in the light of all the passages listed above?

Now read 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15..

- Is Paul advocating complete silence from women?
- Pages 34-35 suggest that the most convincing explanation of 1 Corinthians 14:33-5 is that by 'speaking' Paul means asking questions in the service. Do you find this convincing?

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## Session 1: Bible background and history



You may want to add a little cultural explanation. Regarding 1 Timothy 2, the key points suggested in the book are that women should be encouraged to learn (2:11) and should not teach in a domineering way (2:12) – see p 30. Both these understandings relate to a particular cultural context, which is very different from our world.

When you have given the group an opportunity to explore these two passages, draw threads together by asking:

- Do you find these interpretations convincing?
- And if you do, why do you think some Christians read these verses in a literal way, which tends to result in excluding women from some forms of ministry?

### Explore (10 mins)

In pairs share:

- What has encouraged you as a result of this brief study of Scripture?
- What one thing are you going to do as a result?

### In conclusion (5 mins)

Ask each participant to speak briefly about the woman from the Bible (named or unnamed) who stands out for them. Encourage them to follow this up by re-reading the relevant passage, and pondering on that woman as a model of leadership.

Follow up: read the rest of part 1 of *Growing Women Leaders* (Chapters 2-3)

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## Session 2: Leadership and style



### Aim

To explore the truth of generalisations about men and women  
To enable women to choose appropriate leadership styles and to become more confident in them

### Preparation

Read Chapter 5, 'Do women lead differently?'

As leader, you may want to think ahead about gender stereotypes, where they come from and how truthful they are.

### Way in (15 mins)

Invite participants to share their initial response to the question, do women lead differently?

- How did you arrive at your views?
- What is your reaction to the generalisations in books such as *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (if you have read them), or to other common stereotypical views of male and female attitudes and behaviour (for example: men never ask for directions; women can't read maps; men are more logical than women; women have greater 'emotional intelligence' than men – and so on).

Allow people to share views before summarising the viewpoints which emerge.

### Explore (60 mins)

#### Case study

Invite the group to spend a few minutes reading the case study about Richard and Rebecca (see the participants' notes). Split into groups of three or four to discuss it. Then feed back all together.

Now draw threads together. Most research suggests that women and men lead in similar ways when in the same situation. But where there are differences, the main ones are that women tend to be more collaborative and relational. Of course there are exceptions – and the danger of attributing 'collaborative working' to women is that one might expect men to be less collaborative. What dangers might this have?

Explore some of the implications, especially for collaborative leaders in a historically hierarchical church, with regard to:

- following a predecessor who had a different style
- congregational or group expectations
- fostering good teamwork
- the extent to which someone who has developed and used a collaborative leadership style can continue with that style once he/she has become an overall leader
- confidence in one's own leadership style.

Briefly reflect on the power of a 'blended' leadership style: the need for a repertoire of different styles for different contexts. Explore the situations for which a collaborative style is appropriate. When might a more directive style be more effective?

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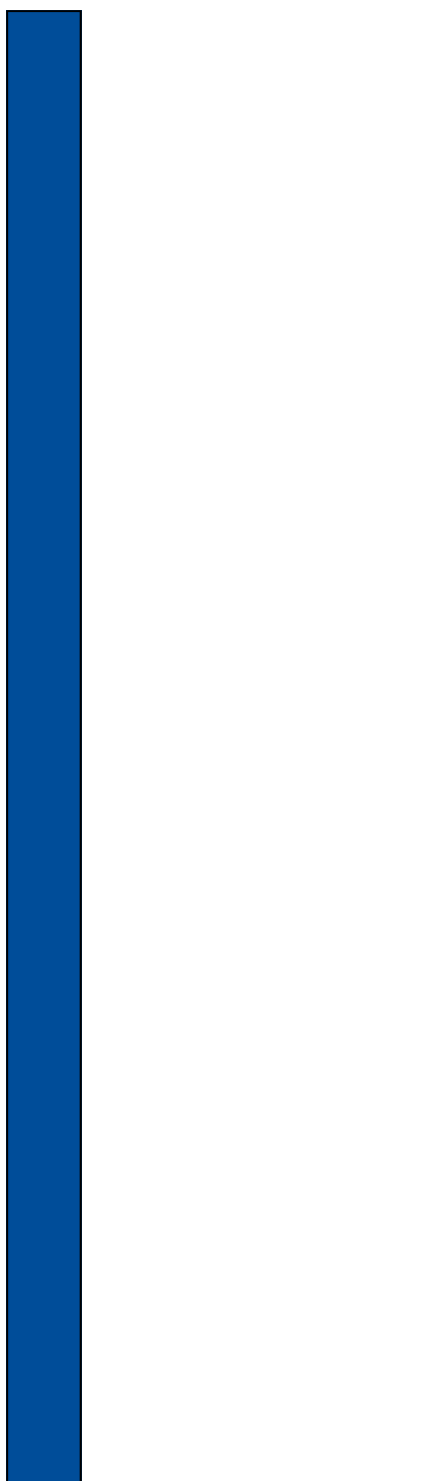
## Session 2: Leadership and style



### In conclusion (15 mins)

Sum up the session. Point to further resources on leadership styles: you can find some online by typing 'leadership style' into a search engine; there is some good information on [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com).

Allow time to pray in pairs, or as a group, for one another around the area of leadership style, and regarding any questions or issues which the session has raised.



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## Session 3: Issues for women leaders



### Aim

To help women discover ways of stepping up in leadership, developing as leaders, and being authentic

### Way in

Research suggests that female students routinely underestimate their academic achievements, in contrast to male students who typically overestimate them – even where performance of both genders is similar. The same pattern also seems to apply in other contexts. For example, a woman looks to step up to a leadership role, and thinks a lack of experience rules her out, while a man with similar experience thinks he will succeed.

Start the ball rolling with this question:

- Have you seen this in your own experience or the experience of others?

Then follow this up with questions on what lies behind this:

- Do you think that in general, women are less confident than men? Why do you think this is?
- Is it more or less true in a church context than in business, professions or other contexts?

### Explore

#### Confidence

'Confidence is the sweet spot between arrogance and despair.' Rosabeth Moss Kanter.

- How do people show lack of confidence?
- What effect might this have on their leadership?
- How might it help us to be reminded that 'our competence comes from God' (2 Corinthians 3:5)?
- What does it mean for Paul to write, 'I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength'? (Philippians 4:13)?

Pages 164-65 of the book suggest some ways to grow in confidence. Invite the group to look at these, then share (as they feel comfortable) with the rest of the group, which of these might help them most.

#### Support structures, modelling and mentoring

Positive role models, and supportive relationships are key to building self-esteem, sharing stories of good practice and encouraging each other through difficult times. Give some examples of these from your own experience. Then invite members of the group to share:

- What support structures do you already have?
- What structures would you find helpful?
- How are you going to find them?
- What role might a group like this have for the future?

#### Developing as a leader

Look at the checklist of ideas on page 219 of the book. Invite each person to share one idea which they would like to pursue within the next month. If possible find a way to keep each other accountable on this.

### In conclusion

Take time to pray for each other around the issues of confidence, development and support structures which you have shared.