

The logo for CPAS, consisting of the letters 'c', 'p', 'a', and 's' in a stylized, lowercase, white font. The 'c' and 'p' are connected, and the 'a' and 's' are also connected. The logo is 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, golden-brown grass, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy white clouds. The horizon is visible in the distance.

# women in mind

Three sessions on  
women and leadership

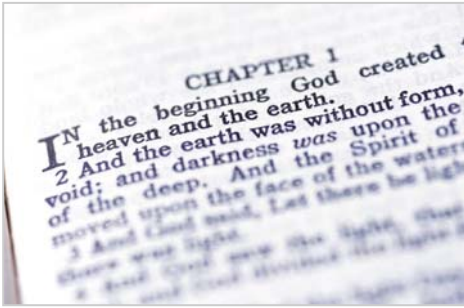
Rosie Ward

- Bible background and history
- Leadership and style
- Issues for women leaders

Participants' notes for women-only groups

# 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 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)

In a group of three or four, look at the images and stories that have been provided. What do they say about women leaders? For example, are there common features in terms of age, dress, areas of leadership (eg politics, business, sport), and so on?

Prepare to communicate your group's thoughts and findings to the wider group in whatever way you wish.

Then discuss the assumptions, understanding and experience that you bring to this issue; or consider the question of what it means for you to be a leader.

### Or

Spend a few minutes thinking of key moments in your journey as a leader. Then take up to five minutes (depending on group size) to share something of your experience as a woman 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?

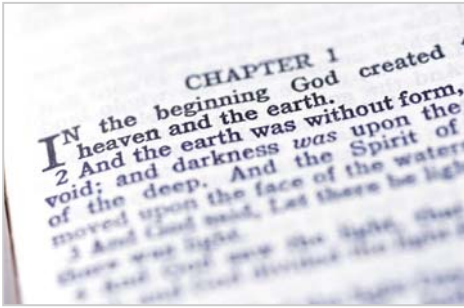
Now read 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15

- Is Paul advocating complete silence from women?

Pages 34-35 suggests 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



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).

Both these understandings relate to a particular cultural context, which is very different from ours. Do you find these interpretations convincing? 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 about this brief study of Scripture?
- What one thing are you going to do as a result?

### In conclusion (5 mins)

Is there one woman in Scripture (named or unnamed) who stands out for you?

Make time after following the session to re-read the relevant passage, and consider what you can learn from her 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?'

### Way in (15 mins)

Share your response to the question, Do women lead differently? What is your reaction to stereotypes about how men and women behave?

### Explore (60 mins)

#### Case study

Spend a few minutes reading the case study, then discuss it in a group of three or four. Be prepared to feed back your comments to the rest of the group.

Richard is the new vicar of St Mary's. He finds that the musical aspect of the worship, led by an elderly choir, is uninspiring, and that the church has no sense of purpose or direction. He was taught at theological college to make any radical changes within a few months of arriving – during the 'honeymoon' period. He dismisses the organist, disbands the choir, and soon many of the older members have left. But he has also recruited a couple of young musicians, who have started playing guitar and keyboard, and two young couples have started to attend.

- How do you react to this?

Then imagine a different scenario:

Rebecca comes as a new incumbent to St Stephen's, and finds a similar situation. She sets up a task group to look at new forms of worship and arranges visits to other churches. But progress is slow and several members of the congregation oppose any change in principle. At PCC meetings she starts a process of discerning vision, but people find this confusing, because the previous vicar made all the decisions himself, with the PCC simply discussing matters of fabric and finance. One of the more able members of the PCC resigns.

- Rebecca is confused. Has she gone about things in the wrong way?
- Why do you think she has been received so negatively?
- What might she do as she looks to move forward from here?

Does your leadership style veer towards the autocratic or the collaborative?

In what situations is a collaborative style most appropriate? When might a more directive style be more effective? What might a 'blended' style of leadership look like?

### In conclusion (15 mins)

Pray for one another around the area of leadership style. Try to include 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 developing as leaders, stepping up in leadership, and being true to oneself.

### Way in

Research suggests that female students routinely underestimate their academic achievements, in contrast to male students who typically overestimate them – even where the performance of both genders is similar. The same pattern 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 the same experience and ability thinks he will succeed.

- Have you seen this in your own experience or the experience of others?
- In general, are women less confident than men? Why do you think this is? Is a church context different from the business/professional world?

### Explore

#### Confidence

According to Rosabeth Moss Kanter: 'Confidence is the sweet spot between arrogance and despair'. 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 say: 'I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength' (Philippians 4:13)?

Pages 164-165 of *Growing Women Leaders* suggest some ways to grow in confidence, depending on what we most need:

- Increased competence – skills and knowledge
- More time to prepare for what we do in public
- Using a mentor or coach for personal development
- Being reminded of who we are in Christ
- Healing from past damage or hurts

If you lacking confidence, which of these might help you most? What else might help you? After reflection, share these with the rest of the group.

#### Support structures, modelling and mentoring

Research shows that role models and supportive relationships are of key importance to building self-esteem and to growing as a leader. Take time to consider and share your responses to these questions:

- 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.

Spend a few minutes considering it, and then share one idea which you'd like to pursue within the next month.

### In conclusion

Take time to pray for one another around the issues of confidence, support structures and development that you have shared.