

6. The Church, Fellowship, Leadership and Role

Training objective:-

To understand the importance of the Church and our fellowship together as Christians. To understand what the Bible says about leadership within the Church. To look into biblical distinctions between gender and role.

Study:-

The definition of Church

- The world traditionally uses the word "Church" in a number of different ways; a building - "I'm going down to the church."; a vocation - "He's going into the church."; an institution - "The church ought to speak out."
- The Greek word Church is 'ekklesia' means literally 'called out ones'. This word was used in the time of the Bible to speak of any assembly where people were called together for a meeting, however, when used in a religious sense it meant the people of God, rather than a building.
- Jesus defined the Church when He said 'where 2 or more are gathered in My name, there I am amongst them'- Matt 18:19-20

Pictures of the Church

There are numerous pictures of the Church in scripture, here are some:

- The family of God- Eph 2:19; 3:15; 1Cor 12:13; 1Tim 3:15; 1Pet 4:17
- The building of God- 1Cor 3:11,16; Eph 2:20-22; 1Pet 2:5; Rev 21:3
- The bride of Christ- Mk 2:18-20; Rev 21:2
- The body of Christ- Rom 12:5; 1Cor 10:16; 12:27; Eph 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19
- The vehicle for the Kingdom of God to be established- Col 1:13; Rom 14:17

The scope of the Church

- There is only one Church (Eph 4:1-6). Denominations are not God's plan
- The Church is local (Matt 18:17), regional, national, global, universal (Matt 16:18)

The importance of the Church

- It is God's will that all are gathered in one body (Christ) and reconciled to God through one body (Eph 1:9-10). The Church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23)
- The Church is God's glorious inheritance (Eph 1:18)
- The Church makes known the wisdom of God (Eph 3:10)
- Jesus is primarily glorified by the Church- this applies to all generations (Eph 3:21)
- Jesus said that the gates of death would be no match for His Church (Mt 16:16)
- Jesus died for the Church (Eph 5:25-32). Paul suffered for it (Eph 3:13; Col 1:24). We too are encouraged to suffer for it's sake (1John 3:16)

Who the Church is for

- The Church is for everyone- all ages, sexes, nations, languages, races, backgrounds, abilities etc. The word 'catholic' originally meant 'whole, complete' and refers to the fact that Church is for all types of people, not just some (Mat 28:19; Acts 2:38,41; Rev 7:9)
- The strength of this body lies in its very diversity. It is not a club where everyone

shares the same interests, and comes from the same background. It's a body where there's a great difference between the ear and the foot, yet all committed to a common goal - (1Cor 12:14-26).

The word 'Fellowship' in classical Greek usage

- The Greek word for fellowship is 'koinonia'. It comes from the word 'koinos' ('common') and means 'sharing in common'. It was used in secular Greek to describe a business partnership; the closeness and of the marriage relationship, and people's relationship with God or a god.

The ways in which the word 'Fellowship' is used in the New Testament

- Sharing close friendship (Acts 2:46; 2Cor 6:14; 1John 1:3). True friendship flows out of us becoming friends of God. We have fellowship in the Spirit (2Cor 13:14; Phil 2:1); with Christ (1Cor 1:9; 10:16; Phil 3:10); with God (1John 1:6).
- Practical and financial sharing with those less fortunate (Rom 15:26; 2Cor 8:4; 2Cor 9:13; Heb 13:16)
- Partnership/fellowship in the work of the gospel (Phil 1:5); in the faith (Eph 3:9);

How can we reach this level of 'fellowship' with others in the church?

- Taking seriously the commands of Jesus to love one another (Jn 13:1-35)
- **Sharing of Heart.** We need to be real with each other, letting other people into our lives, to know the real 'us' - (James 5:16).
- **Sharing of Life.** Spending time with one another. In Acts 2 : 46, we read that "every day they met together." The level of commitment to God and one another was very great - they knew whenever the Church came together, be it spiritual, or social, they were part of a body, with responsibilities towards the rest of that body.
- **Sharing of Goods.** The early Christians had "all things in common" - (Acts 2:46). Whilst it appears this act was not repeated in the New Testament, the principle of meeting the practical needs of those in the body continued - (2Cor 8:13). The wealthy were urged to see their money as a special ministry, and responsibility from God, whilst the poor were urged not to be idle!
- **Sharing of Gifts.** (1 Cor 12:12-26). Church is not to be a 'one man ministry' – (v14). For the health of the body, all members need the others to exercise their gifts – (v21). None of the gifts are unimportant – (v22). God has given us gifts and abilities to use for His glory, and to be a blessing in His Body - (1Cor 12:7). It is also a biblical principle that the more you put into something, the more you get out of it - (Luke 6:38).

Some of the difficulties that we find in being able to reach this level of fellowship

- **Fear-** letting people come close to us, opens us up to the possibility of being hurt. Past experience of rejection may also make us hesitant.
- **Pride-** we may be proud of who and what we are, (e.g. gifting, money, social status), and thus want to limit our social 'circles'.
- **Selfishness-** wanting to only mix with those that we like. Not wanting to commit ourselves to the cost involved in close fellowship.
- **Inadequacies-** feelings that you, or your contributions to fellowship are unimportant.

Discipline within the Church

The Bible outlines the way we should deal with conflicts within the Church

- Bearing with and forgiving one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13)

- Forgiveness- as Christ forgave us- Lord's prayer (Matt 6:14-15), 70x7- Mt 18:21-35.
- Tell to just the person, then bring a witness, then tell to the Church. Finally treat as an non-believer- Matt 18:15-20
- Where someone is caught in a sin, the spiritual should restore them gently (Gal 6:1; James 5:20)
- Sometimes, due to gross unrepentant sin, excommunication was necessary in the early church (1Tim 1:20; 1Cor 5:5). When individuals repented they were encouraged back into fellowship (2Cor 2:7-8; see 7:8-11).
- We are warned not to fellowship with certain individuals who are bringing down Christ's name by unrepentant gross sin or by causing division or false teaching (Tit 3:10)

Cultivating a teachable spirit

- God is our loving Father and will discipline us for our own good (Heb 12:6; Rev 3:19). Sometimes this will come through a word of concern or correction from fellow Christians. Leaders have a particular responsibility for the welfare of the sheep and at times will need to bring a word of correction in love.
- Everyone is submissive, until they are told something that they do not want to hear!

Leadership is biblical

- Leadership is a principle instigated by God to bless and protect us. God has ordained authority structures within the world around us for our welfare- family, school, police, army, legal system, government, queen- Rom 13:1-7; 1Pet 2:13-17
- God time and again raised up leaders for His people Israel, and where there were no leaders disorder reigned- (Judges 21:25)
- Jesus is the supreme authority in the church (Matt 28:18, and Eph 1:20). However, he has given responsibility and delegated authority to individuals within His Church that they may lead His people (Matt 10; 2Cor 13:10). This is not a dictatorship but a role of servant leadership for which the individual will have to account to God when completed.

Leadership within marriage

- God created both man and woman in His own image and equal. They both have the same status and inheritance rights- Gen 1:27; Gen 5:1-2; Matt 19:4; Acts 2:17-18; Gal 3:26-28
- However, equality in status does not mean that both have the same role, function or responsibilities before God. In the Godhead we see both a unity and equality, but also a voluntary submission of Jesus to the Father's leadership (1Cor 11:3). This equality, but difference in role in the trinity is also reflected in roles within marriage right from the creation of the first man and woman. In Gen 2, verses 18 and 20, both verses show the equality of man and woman, and also their different roles by using the Hebrew word 'neged' meaning 'equivalent to' speaking about the status of the woman and also the difference in role by using the Hebrew word 'ezer' meaning 'helper', indicating that the man has leadership responsibility and the woman responsibility to provide support. This difference in role within marriage that was first initiated at creation is referred to by Paul in 1Cor 11:9.
- The fall of mankind happened when the natural roles within marriage were reversed. The serpent spoke to the woman (Gen 3:1) and tempted her to make a decision against a command and warning given to the man by God before the woman was created (2:16-18). Notice that the man was also present when the serpent approached the woman (Gen 3:6). The woman was beguiled by the

serpent (Gen 3:13) and took the decision to eat from the tree. The man allowed the woman to make the decision and although he was aware it was against what God had said to him, instead he followed her lead (Gen 3:17), knowing full-well he was doing wrong. This role reversal is referred to by Paul in 1Tim 2:14.

- The effects of the fall were not the introduction of roles within marriage, but the distortion of them. Tension between male and female would come in as a result of sin. This would be manifest in discordant relationships where a wife would try to usurp the leadership of her husband and a husband try to enforce his leadership upon his wife (Gen 3:16b). The phrase 'your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you' is exactly the same terminology used just a few verses later in Gen 4:7 when God warns Cain that 'sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it'- in other words, there would be a power struggle going on between the sexes as a result of the fall.
- The teaching of the New Testament in light of the victory of Jesus on the cross is the return to defined marriage roles before the fall- that of loving leadership by the husband and faithful support by the wife. Women are encouraged to submit to their husbands and the husbands are encouraged to love their wives- (1Pet 3:1-7; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:1-5).

Leadership within the local church.

There are 2 recognised categories of leadership outlined in the New Testament for a local Church. These are elders (1Tim 5:17-21) and deacons (1Tim 3:8-13). Phil 1:1 is addressed to these two categories of leadership but uses a different word for elders (bishops) which will be explained shortly.

Elders in the Old Testament

- The usual Hebrew word for elder was '*zaqen*' meaning 'old'. It meant someone who had the maturity to govern the people. Another term used less frequently was '*siyb*' meaning 'grey-haired'
- Elders ruled within a house or family (Gen 50:7; 2Sam 12:17; Ps 105:22)
- Cities and towns had elders (Num 24:4,7; Deut 19:12; 21:1-19; 22:15; Judg 8:14; Ruth 4:9,11)
- Israel had elders (Ex 3:16; 4:29; 12:21; 17:5; 18:12; 24:1,9,11,14)
- 70 elders at the time of Moses were anointed by the Holy Spirit (Num 11:16-25). This grouping of 70 leaders was the background to what later became the Sanhedrin in the New Testament (Matt:2; 16:21).

Elders in the New Testament

- In the New Testament Church elders were appointed to lead the Church from the beginning. Where new Churches were planted Elders were appointed once the church had sufficiently grown (Tit 1:5). They were not to be appointed hastily (1Tim 5:22 which follows verses 17-21 which speak about elders).
- The word used for elder in the New Testament is the Greek word *presbyteros*. It can mean an older person, or a person who is spiritually mature enough to govern. The New Testament also uses two other words when referring to an elder. The first is bishop (Greek *episkopos* meaning 'overseer'). This describes the role of an elder- to spiritually oversee the Church. The other is shepherd, or pastor (Greek *poimen*). This describes how an elder is to function- by leading and feeding the sheep. These are all different aspects of the same role. It is those who teach, oversee and lead the congregation. In Acts 20 all three terms are used interchangeably when Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17,28). Again all three terms are

used for the same role in 1Pet 5:1-2. Elders in Titus 1:5 are called overseers in Titus 1:7 and the qualifications for an overseer in 1Tim 3:1-7 are almost identical to those for an elder in Tit 1:6-9.

- The biblical standard is for there to be a plurality of elders in each local Church (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 20:7, 17,28; 21:18; Tit 1:5; 1Tim 4:14; Jam 5:14; Phil 1:1; 1Pet 5:1-3; Heb 13:17).
- The qualifications for eldership are fundamentally to do with character, however they also needed to be able to teach to function as elders, and should not be novices (1Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:6-9). These passages state that an elder must be 'the husband of one wife' (1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6) and 'must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way' (1Tim 3:4). As there are no qualifications given regarding female elders, and no examples of female elders in the New Testament it would appear that this is to be a male role rather than a female one. 2John v1 is addressed 'to the elect lady and her children' and closes with 2John v13 'the children of your elect sister greet you'- this verse is difficult to interpret as it is unclear whether this is referring to a woman leading a church, or the church itself, or even a lady who has led people to the Lord but not in a leadership position. Some suggest that Paul speaks of female elders in Tit 2:3, but the female equivalent term for the male word for elder (*presbyteros*) is *presbytera*. This passage, however, uses the term *presbytidas* which means 'older women'. It is the equivalent female term to the male term he uses in Tit 2:2, *presbytas* which always means 'older men' (Lk 1:18; Philem 9).

How do other ministries relate to elders?

- Elders were the authority in a local Church and other ministries were invited in and weighed by them. Apostolic covering and input from this and other ministries appeared to happen either through invitation from the Elders of a local Church, or where an Apostle was personally responsible for planting the Church.
- Even though Peter was gifted as an Apostle (1Peter 1:1) and a Pastor (John 21:15-17), on a local basis he served as an Elder (1Pet 5:1). A big bearing on this must have been His call by Jesus to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). It is God who calls and gifts the people and local leadership teams that then recognise this call and encourage their input. Although Paul was an Apostle, he could only be an Apostle where he was received by local Churches, and even in the Church in Corinth, where he had a right to be welcomed, they had opened themselves up to other apostolic input that was unhelpful- (2Cor 10:12-15). In Rev 2:2 the Church in Ephesus is commended for testing those claiming falsely to be Apostles, suggesting that the apostolic was invited in and tested by local Church eldership.

Deacons

- The word means 'servant'. Their role was to serve the Church in any way from practical to spiritual, however, they did not need to be able to teach (see this stipulation in the qualifications for elders in 1Tim 3:2 contrasted to no stipulations for deacons in 1Tim 3:8-13). They served to ease the workload on the Elders, so that the Elders could provide adequate spiritual oversight of the Church (Acts 6:2-4).
- The apostles in the early church (Acts 6) appointed a group to take over the job of 'waiting on tables' to free the Apostles to spend more time in prayer and teaching. It is thought that this group were the first deacons.
- The qualifications for deacons-1Tim 3:8-12
- Women, it appears, could and did serve as deacons- see Phoebe in Rom 16:1 which uses the word 'deacon' in reference to Phoebe. Also in 1Tim 3:11 there are

qualifications given for women regarding being deacons. The words used here 'likewise, the women' can also mean 'likewise, the wives', however, it is likely that it applies to female deacons, especially considering the fact that Paul had a number of co-workers who were female- Rom 16:1; Phil 4:2-3; Rom 16:3, 6,12; Acts 16:14-15

Tackling some tricky passages

- There is great debate concerning the correct interpretation of three particular passages in scripture 1Cor 11:1-16; 1Cor 14:26-40; 1Tim 2:8-15. I will give my present thoughts on these as follows:

1Cor 11:1-16 – Should women wear head coverings?

- I believe that the important aspect of Paul's teaching here is the principle of a woman respecting her husband's leadership within marriage. If someone lives in a culture whereby to uncover their head means rebellion against their husband then it is appropriate to wear a head covering. In our western culture this does not apply, but the biblical principle of a husband's headship does.

1Cor 14:26-40 - What is the meaning of 'silence' here?

- Paul cannot be asking women not to speak in church as he had previously given guidelines concerning women praying and prophesying (1Cor 11:5).
- The speaking they are not permitted to do in 1Cor 14:34 is explained in the following verse 'if they want to learn something let them ask their own husbands at home'. It seems that Paul is saying that the women should not be interrupting the prophetic flow by publicly asking questions about the prophetic words people had brought in the meeting. This may edify the women asking the questions, but would not be edifying to the majority. It would also not be showing the beauty of a quiet spirit, which Paul advocates.
- 1Cor 14:26 and 1Cor 14:40 introduce and summarise the point Paul is trying to make in this passage- 'let all things be done for edification, decently and in order'. Verses 27-28 give guidelines to those who speak in tongues, when to 'speak' in tongues, and when to be 'silent'. Verses 29-33 gives guidelines to those who prophesy, when to 'speak' in prophecy, and when to be 'silent'. Verses 34-35 gives guidelines to the women on when to ask questions, and when to be 'silent'.

1Tim 2:8-15 – Can a woman teach or exercise authority in the Church?

- There are contexts where Paul clearly encouraged women to teach, and commended it- (Tit 2:3- older women to the younger women, 1Tim 1:5; 2:15 mother and grandmother it would seem taught Timothy from childhood).
- In Acts 18:26- Priscilla and Aquila together took Apollos aside and explained the word of God more accurately to him- Acts 18:26. Paul wrote 1Timothy about 14 years after this, and it is addressed to the church in Ephesus (1Tim 1:3), which at that time would have been the home church of Priscilla and Aquila after they had been to Rome (Acts 18:18-19,21; 2Tim 4:19). However, despite Priscilla's ability, Paul still gives the rule that he does not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man. The context of this appears to be when the church gathers together (1Tim 2:8-9). In this context Paul is saying a woman should not teach or have authority over a man. It would appear that the governmental aspects of leadership in the local church, such as eldership oversight and teaching the assembled body are a male role. However, as it seems Priscilla assisted her husband in teaching Apollos in an informal setting, thus there is scope for informal teaching to take

place, such as in a homegroup setting, as long as it does not undermine the main teaching of the specific local church. God gifts women as well as men in the area of teaching, but the exercising of this gift should be according to scriptural guidelines.

- We need to balance this passage against others. Deborah was raised up by God as a great leader (Judg 4 & 5). Esther's position and bravery as queen saved the Jewish nation from destruction (Est 1-10). Ruth's sacrifice for her mother in law paved the way for the family tree of King David, and ultimately Jesus (Ruth 1:8-18, 4:13-22; Mt 1:5-16). Zipporah's initiative saved Moses' life (Ex 4:22-26). We are now living in the age of the Spirit, prophesied by Joel (Joel 2:28-29), where the Holy Spirit is poured out on all, and where His gifts are given freely to male and female alike (1Cor 12:11, 14:26; Eph 5:19; 1Pet 4:10-11). Women as well as men are to obey the great commission and make disciples, teaching them to obey Christ (Mt 28:19-20). Women were the first at the tomb witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus (Mt 28:1-10). The Samaritan woman was an amazing evangelist (John 4:39). Ps 68:11 mentions a great company (of women, as the verb is feminine) who proclaimed God's word- this was often the case when the good news of victory needed proclaiming (Ex 15:20-21; Judg 5; 1Sam 18:6-8). Martha sat at Jesus' feet as a disciple listening to His teaching (Lk 10:38-42). Anna had the revelation of who Jesus was, and proclaimed this to all the hungry (Lk 2:36-38). Women took a prophetic lead by anointing Jesus ready for His death (Mt 26:7-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 11:2; Jn 12:3). A woman was the key to the gospel coming to Europe (Acts 16:13-15). A woman is possibly referred to as an Apostle in Rom 16:7, although it is unclear whether the name was definitely female and also unclear what 'amongst the Apostles' is actually referring to.
- Jesus placed great dignity on women, in a culture where they were often regarded as second-class citizens. He was not afraid to go against the culture by addressing women in public (John 4:7-26; John 8:10-11; Lk 7:12-13; Lk 8:48; Mt 9:22; Mk 5:34; Lk 11:27-28; Lk 13:12; Lk 23:27-31). However, despite being willing to go against cultural norms, Jesus chose only male apostles in the 12, and this is perhaps due to the governmental function they were to have in the early church. We need God's wisdom as we make choices today regarding how we structure our families and His Church so that we are standing on a solid biblical foundation. We also need God's grace as we bear with one another regarding our different interpretations of sensitive areas of teaching. Above all we need to love one another.

Implications:-

- The church is not a building but a people. Therefore, relationships are crucial to the well-being of the Church- good relationships mean strong Churches.
- The Church is not for a certain type of person, but for all- we need to always be a welcoming people.
- True fellowship has a cost- it involves sharing our lives with others. Love for God, whom we have not seen, is demonstrated by our love for His family whom we have seen (1John 4:20-21).
- God raises up leaders both in society and in the church for our well-being, protection and development. He sets the pattern for healthy leadership and blesses us as we work with our leaders in the various avenues of life.
- God created the sexes both equal and yet different. As we accept our responsibilities, and work together in love, we will see a beautiful harmony within marriage and within the Church which will glorify God.