

Women and Men Serving Together

Module 1

Cultural Models of Leadership

Unit 1 – Introduction to Women and Men Serving Together

Hello, my name is Michele Breene and I am passionate about developing leaders and teams in a variety of contexts. For many years I have had the privilege of supporting C-suite leaders of those Fortune 500 companies through workshops and coaching relationships whilst at the same time being mother of 3 girls and a volunteer leader at my local church. Quite different contexts but there are many parallels! I was the only girl child in my family so grew up in a 'boy's world' but then attended all-girl schools both as student and teacher. I learned early on to appreciate the value of each gender and I experienced the challenges of a women working in a 'man's world' through my professional practice of leadership development and executive coaching.

This course has evolved over the many years that we have been facilitating workshops in servant leadership around the globe. We have learned from expert theologians, academics and wonderful leaders across the nations and I am grateful to them and for you as you join this journey of learning with us. The issue of women and men working, serving and leading together as leaders of families, communities, churches, governments, non-profit organizations or large multi-national Fortune 500 companies is more critical now than it has ever been and yet it is also the least addressed. It is my hope for you that this course will guide you towards new ways of thinking which lead to innovative strategies that maximize the potential your men and women have been given to grow God's kingdom together and shine as beacons of light wherever you are engaged.

It is my deeply felt belief that where women and men learn to serve mutually together the fruitfulness of their partnership will be unleashed in powerful ways to grow their communities into true reflections of God's image in a hurting world.

Unit 2 – The Purpose of This Course

The purpose of this course is to invite leaders to go deeper into understanding God's desire for men and women to be good stewards of their leadership gifts. Through exploring scripture, the course will encourage us to work with God in freeing women and men to serve together in extending God's Kingdom.

The main focus of this purpose is on Women and Men working together in Leadership:

- From a Biblical / New Testament perspective
- With a focus on stewardship of gifts for both genders

- How we lead our churches and ministries as Jesus would have lead them, rather than as our culture and traditions recommend.
- And freeing women from injustice that robs them of their opportunities to use their leadership gifts for His Kingdom purposes.

DAI's focus is on Christians reflecting more accurately the culture of the Kingdom of God that is countercultural to every culture on earth today.

Now, I have a question for you. Think about a woman who has had a deep and positive impact in your life. Think of someone specific and as recent a story as possible. Go to your workbook for this module and fill in your answer there. Click continue when you are done.

I hope you came up with some good examples of women who have had impact in your lives. Women regularly provide deep and positive impact on the lives of Christian leaders and part of what we want to explore in this course is how that can be encouraged and enabled to happen even more.

What we believe about the role of women in leadership today is more confusing than ever before, and why we believe what we believe is also confusing. Most commonly we all believe more or less whatever our cultures have taught us, or what we've learned from the examples we've seen in our churches and societies.

Now we're going to be looking at a Case Study that might help us to think more about women and men working together in leadership. It is about a woman named Rebecca who is a medical doctor. We'll learn more about her as we progress through this course.

Unit 3 – Case Study: Rebecca's Bible Study

Rebecca was a respected doctor, community leader, and long-term member of the local evangelical church. Her passion to help the poor and needy often put her in the forefront of efforts to mobilize the community and she was incredibly good at it. Lately she had begun to realize that the only time she seemed unable to make a meaningful contribution was at her church. She volunteered at the nursery, cooked meals for the parish dinners, and sometimes taught in the Sunday school programs. Though she didn't mind doing any of these tasks, none of them were terribly fulfilling for her, nor did she feel that she did them particularly well. Usually when this troubled her, she just

chastised herself that she needed to learn humility and grow in her willingness to serve others.

Lately though, this had begun to trouble her more and more. Sometimes she wondered if God had made a mistake about the gifts He had given her? She always seemed to be the natural one to lead and take charge at the hospital or when volunteering in the community, but of course that wasn't appropriate at the church since she was a woman.

Ever since Rebecca had come to know the Lord, she had carried a deep passion for Jesus. All she wanted was for her life to reflect His Kingdom. She wanted to be able to do all that she could for Jesus, but it seemed that the church was the place where she was able to give the least.

Rebecca attended a weekly prayer meeting led by an older woman in the church that provided a chance for her to fellowship with other women. Often they would drink tea and discuss life and pray together for a couple of hours at a time. This week Rebecca decided to introduce the subject of women in leadership and see what wisdom these other women could provide.

As they sat down together, Rebecca casually asked the question, "Do you feel like all women are to be in submission to all men?"

One woman quickly responded and said, "Well, I don't know if it's biblical, but it's certainly the way the world works!" Everyone laughed and several picked up their tea.

Another lady looked thoughtfully around and said, "I don't think that's biblical at all. Submission to my husband, yes, but submission to all other men, I don't think so."

Another woman chimed in, "well, I don't even believe that submission to my husband is really where the issue ends, I believe my husband should also be in submission to me. I believe the bible draws a picture of mutual submission in marriage." A couple of women in the room gasped slightly and one muttered under her breath, "Well we can see who the 'feminist' is here."

Mary, a single lawyer and author said carefully, "Well, I've read some interesting articles that came out of a conference in America in the last few years about something called 're-imagining' and I wonder if I need to explore the concept of God as a female deity, a goddess if you will. Don't you think that's interesting?"

This was just too much for some of the ladies and one of them, Sarah quickly said, "The bible is perfectly clear about the role of women and that's good enough for me. Women should submit to their husbands and they are not allowed to teach or be in authority over men!"

"But," Mary responded, "what about Abigail and David?" Don't you remember that Abigail deceived her husband, brought David all the food and gifts, and saved her household! There's also the example of Deborah the judge and even Esther."

Sarah came back quickly, "Well that was just Old Testament. Paul clearly says that women are to be silent in the church. We all know that passage!"

After several minutes of this, Rebekah said quietly, "Maybe we need a thorough bible study on this subject so that we have a way of determining what the Word really does say overall."

She began a process of reading everything she could on this issue of women in leadership. In the secular literature she quickly identified several streams of thought. One seemed to say that in order to be a successful woman leader you had to think and act like a man. Another was that women were so capable that they threaten most men and therefore men feel the need to dominate and control based on their physical superiority. Essentially men are the enemy and women must fight for their rights.

Although there seemed to be a little truth in several of these theories, none of them were very satisfying. Rebecca was firmly convinced that God had created her just the way she was and that she didn't need to try and be like someone else. She was also convinced that the Christian faith must somehow provide answers for her questions that didn't have to do with fighting and dominating.

She had come to the point that she almost didn't care what the answers were. If the bible truly said that women were to be in submission, not hold positions of authority and remain silent in the church then she wanted to obey her Lord completely. On the other hand if the Christian faith was what others seemed to believe, the only religion that truly saw women as valuable, loved and equal to serve in every role, then she really wanted to know.

She was ready to learn, ready to change, and ready to take the risk to obey God, wherever it led.

Unit 4 – Thinking About What Happened to Rebecca

Could the type of discussion that happened at Rebecca’s bible study group happen with a similar group in your city? What might be the same and what might be different? Take a few moments and answer these questions in your workbook. Click continue when you are done.

It’s important to notice that on the subject of the role of women, everyone has a strong opinion, but few are sure where that opinion comes from.

Or, if they believe it came from scripture, they often have only one or two verses on which their opinion is based.

Unit 5 – Looking at Scripture

In this study we will look at scripture from Genesis through Paul, because the Bible is central to understanding God’s will for us on every subject including this one. But understanding the “plain truth” of the Bible is often more complex than it at first seems. Let’s take a look at one passage that illustrates that well. Let’s read Luke 10: 38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

41 “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

So, in this passage, why is Martha upset? Is it culturally appropriate that she is upset?

Well, Martha is upset because she is having to do all the work and Mary is not helping. The implication is that Mary is lazy or not doing her part.

Is Martha doing what is culturally expected of her?

Yes, of course. Taking care of the house, cooking for guests, preparing the table. She was doing her best to serve in the culturally appropriate way for a woman through cooking and being a hostess.

So, what is Mary doing?

She is sitting at Jesus feet and listening to him.

This is more than a casual visit. If that was the case she would have been in a chair. But this is the posture of a disciple, a student, one learning at Jesus' feet.

What is Jesus trying to say in verse 42? What is his main point?

Here is what some other people have said in the past:

- Jesus is establishing the importance of the contemplative life over the active one.
- Jesus was trying to say that caring for the home and cooking and being hospitable is not very important.

Well, these are possible answers, but the best answer is more like:

Jesus said, "Mary has chosen the better part", for example, listening to Jesus teaching, being discipled by Him and preparing for future ministry. That is not what the culture expected of a woman. These are not the words of a modern "feminist" but of Jesus.

It is easy for us to look past how radical this is. Does it fit your culture's role for a woman?

Jesus was not saying that what Martha was doing was bad, it was just not as good. Some translations say, "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." What cannot be taken away from us? Our relationship with Jesus and those things we do in obedience to him. Not everything good we do, but those things done in obedience.

Here are some questions to think about. What are the roles that God desires women to fulfill? What does God require of women? How do we separate that from what our culture demands or what our family, friends, or even our pastor says is the role of women? What if you are a pastor and/or a husband? Are you sure you understand what the Bible says on these issues? Are you leading in obedience to Biblical truth? Are you sure? What do we believe and why?

Unit 6 – Agreeing on Some Foundational Points

It is important as we begin this study to agree together on some foundational points before we continue.

What would be your definition of the term “secular feminism”?

Well, one author has said that feminists are anyone who believes women are human! In that case all Christians would be feminists!

But seriously, the term feminism has come to mean something very ugly in some cultures. It is about women fighting for their rights, about wanting to become like men, wanting control. Often the subject of endorsing gay marriage, destruction of the family and promoting abortion all get lumped into the subject of women’s rights and the “feminist agenda”.

It becomes easy for evangelical Christians to reject anything related to these subjects because they sound angry, ungodly and evil. Americans have an expression in English that fits this situation. They say, “We’ve thrown out the baby with the bathwater.”

What that means is that we’ve thrown out what is precious with what needs to be thrown out, instead of doing the hard work of carefully separating them to be sure we know which is which.

In this course we are going to do that hard work and seeking God’s perspective on gender and men and women working together, rather than assuming any discussion of this type takes us down the road of angry women fighting for rights, or any other ungodly message.

Unit 7 – Interpretation of Scripture

The authors of this course are firmly Christian, meaning firmly committed to the divine inspiration of the Bible, and therefore the scriptures as the foundation for our beliefs.

But, we as Christians often come to opposite conclusions about what those scriptures say and therefore what we believe. How can that be???

How is it possible for Christians who agree that the scriptures are divinely inspired and the authority for all of our beliefs to disagree over basic issues of faith?

After listening to responses, make sure that the following thoughts were expressed:

Interpretation is the key issue because Christians also believe:

- There is sufficient content in the scriptures to provide us with all we need to live our Christian life
- Any Christian can read the bible themselves and understand what God is saying to them about how to live a life pleasing to him.

Both of these are basic concepts of "The Reformation" that led to the birth of the protestant church in which the average believer did not need an interpreter to understand scriptures but could read and understand it for themselves.

But it is troubling that two equally committed Christians can read the same passage of scripture and disagree about what it means. In fact usually when they disagree, they dismiss the other as "not a true believer" rather than taking the humble approach of exploring whether maybe the other person might be right!

Now I want you to go to your workbooks for this module and answer the following question.

What are some fundamental issues where equally committed Christians disagree? List all of those you can think of in your workbook for this module and click continue when you are done.

Here is what some others have said in the past when they were asked the question: What are some fundamental issues where equally committed Christians disagree? Some of their answers were about:

Different methods of baptism

War versus pacifism

Issues of church governance

Speaking in tongues and other "supernatural" manifestations

And end time prophecy and how that is understood

The Bible is a book of stories, poetry, letters, and was written in various genre's over hundreds of years by a variety of human authors who were inspired by God. It's not a "policy manual"! So, the issue comes back to the interpretation of scripture, which is inherently a human and inexact science and one we will focus on in this course later while studying Paul's passages.

So, I have a question for you, what are two steps that are always required when studying and interpreting scripture?

Well, for those of you who have formally studied theology this is probably an easy question, but for those of you who haven't, it might not have been so easy.

The first step to understanding something that was written long ago and in a foreign setting by people we don't personally know is to try and understand what they meant for it to say at that time and in that setting. Exegesis – is the theological term.

The second step is to take our understanding of what the passage meant back then and apply it to our lives now. The term for this is hermeneutics. This is something we do every day without thinking.

Let's look at an example. A passage like "the wages of sin is death" is easy, because that is obviously just as true today for everyone as it was then. But a verse like "Greet the saints in Rome...." We realize that's not something we should try to do. Those saints died long ago, and most of us are not going to Rome anytime soon. See we do "hermeneutics" rather automatically! Whether we do it well or poorly is the question we'll look at more in another unit.

Unit 8 – Are You Willing to Change What You Believe?

Here is a question that may be shocking: Are you willing to change what you believe? What is your first response?

Well, most people's first response is: "no, of course not! I know what I believe and I'm not about to change it!" Not a bad response, but not totally realistic. Actually, most of us change our beliefs on a regular basis! Not everything we believe, but we are at least adjusting our beliefs as we hear a sermon, study the Bible and experience life.

Now I want you to think of examples of religious beliefs that you have changed in the last 10 years. Go to your workbooks and list at least a few. When you have completed your list, click continue.

The history of the church is full of examples of this. In the US for example, the church "changed its mind" on the issue of slavery. Only 175 years ago, large segments of the conservative traditional church believed that slavery was Biblical. They would quote

scriptures like “slaves obey your master” and point out that there is no scripture verse that specifically prohibits it.

Today it would be hard to find a Christian who believes in slavery. How did that change happen? Most people today would say that the Bible has always stated that people should be treated with justice, and many passages uphold the concept that slavery is wrong. But 100 years ago, the culture said that owning slaves was okay. It created an economic advantage for some people and some of these people were elders and pastors of churches and wanted the church to condone their behavior. So they found scriptures to support what they wanted others to believe. Now culture has changed its beliefs, and so has the church. Has the Bible changed? No, but the interpretation of what it says has changed.

Scripture tells us about an example of this as well.

Now, let’s read Acts Chapter 15. As you are listening and reading along, think about these questions:

- What is the debate here about?
- Why was this a major issue?
- What was the outcome of the debate?

15 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” **2** This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. **3** The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. **4** When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

6 The apostles and elders met to consider this question. **7** After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. **8** God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. **9** He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. **10** Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to

bear? **11** No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

13 When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. **14** Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. **15** The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

16

“After this I will return
and rebuild David’s fallen tent.

Its ruins I will rebuild,
and I will restore it,

17

that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
even all the Gentiles who bear my name,
says the Lord, who does these things’—

18

things known from long ago.

19 “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. **20** Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. **21** For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. **23** With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,
To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:
Greetings.

24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. **25** So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— **26** men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **27** Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. **28** It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: **29** You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the

meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

Farewell.

30 So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter. **31** The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. **32** Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. **33** After spending some time there, they were sent off by the believers with the blessing of peace to return to those who had sent them. **[34]** But Silas decided to remain there. **35** But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, where they and many others taught and preached the word of the Lord. **36** Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." **37** Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, **38** but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. **39** They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, **40** but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord. **41** He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

So firstly, what is the debate about? Well, tradition was clear that only Jews could be children of God, but clearly God doing something new now, and "saving" Gentiles.

Why was this a major issue? Then the issue arose—shouldn't they be required to be circumcised and keep the whole law? But God seems to be doing something new. James helps them find a new way of interpreting the Old Testament.

And lastly, what was the outcome of the debate? Well, the outcome was that we should accept non-circumcised gentiles as full members of the Body of Christ! Revolutionary! And a change of beliefs!

In the ongoing work of God it is sometimes permissible, indeed necessary for his people to change their minds. It is not necessarily abandoning the authoritative teaching of the Bible, but more likely discovering that there is more in the Bible than we realized!

Unit 9 – What Does Culture Teach You?

Culture teaches us how to behave, it teaches us what is acceptable, normal and how to relate to each other. Culture is the primary teacher that helps us know how we should behave as a man or a woman. It teaches us what is expected of us in that particular culture.

Now I want you to think about your own culture and what messages it give you about what a woman should be and what a man should be.

Now, I want you to go to your workbooks for this module and to name specific TV programs, movies or other media that illustrates these messages and make a list of the dominant messages that your culture gives to men and women about what they should wear and how they should behave and what qualities are “best” or sought after. When you have completed this, click continue.

Did you find that there are many messages and that sometimes those messages are full of conflicts? For instance: Men be macho, strong, ready to fight when needed, but be disciplined, be the provider for the family, because getting rich is really important, etc. For women the messages can be equally confusing: be sexy, attractive, but don't get pregnant without marriage. Be smart, get a good job, but don't act too smart or make too much money or you will be a threat to men and they won't like you.

Think together what the messages might be if you lived in Syria and ISIS was recruiting you, or if you lived in America and making money is the most important value and being homosexual is just fine! How confusing is all this!

Most of us live in a patriarchal culture, which says that men are in charge in everything and women must submit to them. It says that men must rule in government, on the streets, in the home and in the church and anything that threatens a man's place of authority also threatens his manhood. But the question must be addressed, is this Biblical, or just culture?

In fact, in the next unit, let's stop and think about what we believe!

Unit 10 – What the Bible Teaches Us About the Roles Men and Women Should Play

Before we go on any further, let's stop and identify what we believe on a number of things related to this subject of Women and Men working together.

In your workbooks for this module, we want you to complete the questionnaire so you can have a chance to reflect on some of the issues of what the Bible teaches us about the roles men and women should play. This is only for your own use and reflection, so respond as honestly as possible. On the questionnaire, read each statement and then check the box that most accurately reflects your belief:

1, you wholeheartedly agree; 2, you agree somewhat; 3, you are not sure; 4, you disagree somewhat; or 5 you totally disagree. When you have completed filling out the questionnaire, click continue.

Why do you think it is important to ask you to fill out this questionnaire, in other words, why is it important to know what you believe?

Because what we believe impacts what we do!

Now, I want to tell you a little story.

There is a fairy tale about a beautiful young woman who found herself in a situation where she was told daily that she was worthless, useless, ugly and unfit. She had lost her father and had to live with stepsisters and an evil step-mother. They treated her cruelly and made her do all the difficult jobs in the house. They constantly told her that she was worthless, useless, ugly and unfit. She was told regularly that the only role she was capable of fulfilling was that of servant.

One day the King of the Kingdom decided to throw a ball to bring all the eligible young women of the Kingdom together for his son to meet, to find the one destined to be his bride. The prince was a very wise ruler. He was looking for a helpmate, someone who would be his equal, to rule and reign with him over the Kingdom.

The young woman nearly refused to even attend the ball because her evil stepsisters told her she shouldn't bother to go, that she was so worthless she shouldn't even try to be considered for the role. They told her that she needed to remember what her appropriate role was, that she was not created to be a princess. Even at the ball, the young woman could not believe that the prince really wanted to dance with her. She just couldn't believe she was worthy.

Many of you will know the rest of this story. Cinderella ran from the ball but lost her shoe in the process. The prince searched the kingdom for the beautiful girl from the ball. In spite of the tricks of the evil stepsisters, the prince found Cinderella and asked her to be his bride.

The near tragedy here is that Cinderella almost missed her destiny because she believed the lies told to her by her evil stepsisters. She didn't understand and was almost unable to believe what she was actually created for.

What does Scripture really say to us about our destiny as men and women in the Body of Christ? ...About how we should behave and what makes a good or successful man or woman? How is that different than what our culture tells us about ourselves? What about the Church, what does it tell us? Are the words of the church and leadership more like that of the evil stepsisters, that there are only certain roles women can play and that women are unfit for anything else?

What we believe affects what we do. Just like Cinderella, who almost didn't go to the ball and couldn't believe that the prince could be interested in her, our beliefs affect our actions.

Unit 11 – Warnings About This Course

Before we go any further, this study should come with two warnings:

- 1) Don't study this if you are not willing to change! We live in a very broken world, and one of the most broken things is our fundamental understanding of gender and how fairly we treat each other. This study may lead you to new understandings that demand you change in your day-to-day behavior and that may be "dangerous"!

This is a "dangerous" study for women because you may get called a feminist, or rebel, or radically un-submissive, and you may have to take up roles you never imagined are your responsibility.

This is a "dangerous" study for men because you may lose your accepted leadership role, your status and your control. You may have to become a servant leader in a way you never dreamed of!

- 2) This may become EMOTIONAL! That is because it is personal—for each one of us, and it threatens so many things about our daily lives and who we are.

It is emotional because at its roots it threatens our understanding of who we are. It also is emotional because justice is involved. How human beings treat each other is almost always based on power instead of love. Think of human institutions like slavery, or caste systems or tribalism. They are all about who is better or more valuable than someone else. Most wars are based on this. For example, the Nazi Germans convinced themselves that Jews were inferior, etc...

Unit 12 – Why it is Important to Study the Biblical Perspective

So, we've talked about several things in this introduction, but now it is time to clarify our thoughts.

I want you to take some time and answer this question. "Why do you believe it is important to study the Biblical perspective on how women and men should work together in leadership, what their roles should be and how that may be different than what their culture says?"

I want you to write down two or three of the most important reasons that answer this question. Record your answers in your workbook for this module and click continue when you are done.

Here are just three of the reasons that we have heard over the years of teaching this course:

1. **Justice is a major characteristic of God and our behavior must reflect his justice.** When the Church looks more like the Kingdom of God than it looks like the culture around it, unbelievers are attracted and the healing power of the Gospel impacts everything and brings needed healing to our culture. Anything less is only partially effective. More women have died in the last fifty years just because they are women, then men in all the wars in the 20th century...something is broken about the way women are treated. And the trafficking of men, boys, women and girls is only increasing, destroying those made in the image of God.
2. **If we fail to let all those with gifts of leadership, lead just because of their gender we will not have the strength the Church needs to reach the unreached.** If we don't let women use their leadership gifts, and enable men and women to lead together, we will not have the solutions that are desperately needed for our broken world.
3. **We must help women and men discover what God intended them to be, and how he intended them to work together to accomplish his purposes.** Otherwise they

will waste their gifts and talents in trying to be something they were never intended for and miss their destiny.

So, what are we going to study together?

We are going to:

1. Re-examine our theology so that we can come closer in our behavior to what the Bible teaches.
2. Encourage each other to become what God intended for each of us male and female, even if that does not fit the cultural norm.
3. Change, as God shows us we need to.

Enjoy this study. Participate in it with an open heart and mind and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as you seek God's truth on this subject. And please keep in mind that the Bible always has more in it than we understand.

Unit 13 – Your Personal Leadership Growth Plan

Now as we come to the end of this first module, I want you to turn to your student workbooks and work on your "Personal Leadership Growth Plan". Here is the question I want you to write down your thoughts on.

In what ways has this session challenged your thinking about what the Bible says about men and women?

When you have completed this, you can move to the next module.

Module 2
**God's Perfect Plan – Relating and
Working Together**

Unit 1 – Case Study: Rebecca’s Pain

Tears stung her eyes as Rebecca hurried out of the church building toward the street. She thought she heard John, one of the church elders, calling her name but she pretended not to hear and scurried on toward the bus stop. She knew that her emotions were on the verge of spilling over and she just couldn’t risk talking with anyone right now. She needed some time alone with the Lord to sort her thoughts and seek His mind and heart.

Tonight had been the regular monthly leadership meeting of the small church where Rebecca had worshiped for many years. She had gone as usual, a long standing part of the church’s leadership. Through the years the elders and even the pastor had come to recognize her ability to think through issues and help them arrive at the best conclusions. She had never looked for leadership, but always seemed to find herself there, seeing the right direction to go, sharing an idea that others found helpful, or thinking through an issue in such a way that it seemed to help others avoid mishaps. Tonight she had looked forward to sharing a new vision that had been brewing in her mind for some time about a ministry to the growing number of poor and needy living not far from the door of the small building that housed their fellowship. There was so much need so close at hand and she felt the church could do a wonderful ministry with this group.

It was beginning to rain, and she was grateful when the bus arrived. Quickly she slid into a seat. The heat in the bus was stifling even though it was late evening and outside cooler night breezes had begun to blow.

Sitting on the bus staring out the window, images began to flash through her mind of the meeting that had just taken place. Right now she really couldn’t remember how the subject of church governance had come up. Pre-occupied by thoughts of the poor women and children that could be helped, her mind was not completely on the discussion. About the time she started listening intently a vote was being called for a new, more “orthodox” structure that would allow for church growth, which of course was the goal. Not wanting to confront the sincere young missionary from the US, who was pushing for this change, she held her questions thinking this would run its course. Not until they began filling the new positions did she have a growing sense of unease. When her name was proposed for one of the top roles, he quickly explained that—though he liked her personally—women, of course, could not hold such a position of authority as that was unbiblical. Though others seemed slightly taken aback, no one spoke up and the meeting continued.

Waves of emotion washed over her as she climbed wearily from the bus and made her way down the street toward her house. Thankfully because it was late, few others were on the dusty street to see the tears that she could no longer contain wash down her cheeks. It had been years since she had felt this way—unwanted, second class and somehow ashamed.

Rebecca had grown up in the south of the country in a small farming village near the river. She was the fifth child in the family and the only girl. Though girls were not as valued as their brothers, she grew up knowing that her parents had been happy with the birth of this girl child. After all, with four boys already in the family, one girl was not such a calamity.

There was always work to be done, but there was also time for daily games of football down in the field along the river. She loved the game and played with such ferociousness that she generally beat out all the other girls and often several of the boys for scoring. She could still remember the sad day, however, that her mother had pulled her aside and told her she was no longer allowed to play in those games. She was getting older, her mother explained and must realize that young women did not participate in such activities.

Not long after everything changed. One of her older brother's friends, Wadi, came by the house one afternoon to see her brother, but he was not home. In fact no one else was home, a fact which Wadi seemed to quickly realize. Pushing past her into the house, he grabbed her by the hand, dragged her into a back room, forced himself upon her, then was gone. Too terrified and humiliated to say anything to her mother, Rebecca cried and cried that night from shame, fear and emotions she could not even identify.

It happened several times. Though she tried desperately to not be in the house alone or to stop him when he came, he was much stronger than she; there was little she could do and no one she could tell. It was only a few months later when she felt sick every morning and seemed tired all of the time that her mother noticed the change and began to ask questions. When Rebecca finally told her the truth, her mother realized she must be pregnant. If her father or brothers found out she would be killed. It mattered little that she was an innocent victim. In her culture, the blame would rest solely on the woman as the temptress and seducer.

Rebecca was bundled off to her aunt who lived in a city far away. Though the aunt tried to be kind, Rebecca felt the shame her presence brought on her aunt's family. She

remained in hiding there until the baby was born and immediately taken away. At only fourteen she found herself alone, rejected and forced onto the streets by her aunt's family, who felt they had completed their duty.

It was so many years ago and in many ways she had come to see these events as God's grace in her life. If she hadn't been forced from her family she would never have met the Christian mission where she found shelter, received an education and, most importantly, heard the gospel and met her loving Savior.

As she opened her front door, her mind snapped back to the present. This evening's events somehow left her with many of the same emotions she had felt as a child. Being a woman had made many things difficult in her life. Now it even seemed to be a barrier for using her gifts in the church that she loved. Had God made a mistake when He created her, giving her gifts which now could not be used in the Body? She knew that she would only find help in the Scriptures so, even though she was tired, she opened her Bible to Genesis and asked God to give her the understanding she needed to know His truth.

Unit 2 – Communion with God / Dominion Over the Earth

Like Rebecca we are now going to turn to Genesis and look at the "big picture" of what God intended as he created this world and us in it.

In a moment you are going to read Genesis 1 and 2. As you read through those first 2 chapters, two purposes of God are very clear. Mankind was made for two primary purposes:

1. Communion with God, our love relationship with our Father.
2. The task of Taking Dominion over the earth and overseeing God's creation or ruling over God's creation on earth.

Mankind was created for fellowship with God, he desires our fellowship and longs for relationship with us. God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the garden. The reason why sin is ultimately so evil is because it breaks this relationship.

While people all have different personalities, and some are more introverted and others more extroverted, human beings are all inescapably "social". We are made in the image of God and God is inescapably "social". He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit working together and this is our model for working together.

Now, let's read Genesis verses 1 and 2. And while you are reading it, be thinking about what is similar and what is different in the two accounts of the same story.

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." 7 So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. 8 God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.

12 The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

13 And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. 16 God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. 17 God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, 18 to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." 21 So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." 23 And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. 30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

So, a couple of questions for you. What did you hear that was different in these two versions of the same story? And what was the same?

Well, what some people have said in the past is that Genesis 1 gives us the big picture and Genesis 2 tells the story from a different "camera angle", more up close and in detail.

Now, let's look at Genesis 1:26-27 again.

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Now, what did God mean when he said, "...make man in Our image?"

Well, "Our Image" is understood to refer to the Trinity. It is expressed 3 times in those two verses. "In our image...in our likeness...in his own own image. There is no question that we are created in God's likeness and that likeness is plural. We have the qualities of a triune God!

Unit 3 – What is the Trinity in Whose Image We are Created? Part 1

In the beginning, God- Father, Son and Holy Spirit, created. Before that there was only him/them -the triune God. What an amazing Being! Three separate identities united together as one in covenant love. They/he always were and always will be. They share all power and all knowledge yet there is no competition among them. No dominance. No control. Amazing!

Consider this: each one- Father, Son and Holy Spirit, has their own thoughts, emotions and will, yet they act as one. They relate with mutual respect and servant love. They demonstrate how to live and work together in such a way that each one makes significant contributions, without one being less than the other. They each have a purpose, a role and significant functions. They are each responsible to support and make room for the other two. Not one among them is the main player; rather each is designed to be a helpmate for the others.

Now let's consider their plan for us. Together God-Father, Son and Holy Spirit created the heavens and earth....and said "let us make human beings in our image" Gen 1:26. And so was the beginning of our story. He/they made Adam and Eve with separate identities, each with their own thoughts, emotions and will. God built into their design the primary need for a personal relationship with them/him (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) followed by the need for personal relationships with varying degrees of intimacy with other human beings.

God's mandate to both Adam and Eve was to multiply, fill the earth and to cultivate it. Father, Son and Holy Spirit wanted communities of people throughout the earth who lived and related to each other in ways similar to them/him. They wanted our relationships to be characterized by humility, respect, honor, serving, giving and receiving. This was their/his vision for all human relationships, with the husband - wife unit being the most intimate.

The Trinity is truly a mystery and theologians have grappled with understanding the triune God throughout history. While we may never completely "understand" the Trinity, it is important to wrestle with trying to understand if we are going to please God, because we are made in "THEIR" image. It is the model God gives us of relationship and of functioning together to accomplish God's purposes.

Now I want you to think about how you believe the members of the Trinity function together in relationship. Then draw to the best of your ability how they relate to each other and work together. In your workbook for this module, draw what you think it looks like in some type of diagram.

Once you have completed drawing your diagram, click the continue button.

The following is an excerpt taken from a book by Dr. Kevin Giles called "The Trinity and Subordinationism"

The following diagrams are called "trinitariograms". Two-dimensional drawings seeking to illustrate a given understanding of the Trinity are limited in their capacity to capture very much of the majesty of the triune God of revelation. Nevertheless, they can be powerful aids to conceptualization. In this next section, I want to present four models of the Trinity expressed in "trinitariograms" to illustrate the different positions we have discussed. These diagrams have only one purpose: to elucidate how the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity may be conceived.

First, we have the "Hierarchical Model". In this model the Father is "above" the Son, and the Son is "above" the Holy Spirit. This illustration captures the understanding of the Trinity whether the hierarchy is understood in ontological terms or functional terms.

The "Monarche" Model is next. In the early church it was commonly thought that the Father alone was the *monarche*, or the one origin, of the Son and the Holy Spirit; and

most Eastern Orthodox theologians today still endorse the *monarche* view of the Father, although some now question this idea. Many Western theologians think this way of understanding the Trinity implies a certain priority to the Father, even if the Eastern theologians who embrace the *monarche* of the Father say they reject the subordination of the Son and the Spirit in being or action. This model of the Trinity may be illustrated by an equilateral triangle with the Father at the apex.

The next model is referred to as the "Filioque Model". When the Western church in 589 added to the Nicene Creed the words "*and the Son*" (Latin *Filioque*) after the words "the Holy Spirit" "...proceeds from the Father," the idea that the Father was the sole source (*monarche*) of the Son and the Spirit was deliberately subverted, if not excluded. Eastern theologians think this model implies the subordination of the Spirit. Western theologians reject this inference, insisting that what it underlines is the equality of the Father and the Son without questioning the equality of the Spirit. This formulation suggests a trinitariogram that looks like this diagram.

Next we have some Symmetrical Models. As we have noted, most contemporary theologians, building on the historically orthodox tradition, prefer models of the Trinity that underline the equality of the persons and their communal unity. In the ancient church, Athanasius came closest to seeing the Trinity in this way. The next three trinitariograms attempt to capture this thought. It is to be noted they all visualize the Trinity in circular imagery.

Wayne Grudem, at the end of his discussion of the Trinity, sets out a number of trinitariograms and surprisingly favors one that is symmetrical. How he equates this with his understanding of a Trinity in which the Father "has the role of commanding, directing and sending" the Son completely escapes me.

This next diagram is the drawing that I use when speaking on the Trinity. Many have found it helpful.

Professor Shirley Guthrie offers the next diagram. He envisions the Trinity as three divine persons dancing joyfully together, hand in hand, in a circle. He advocates this on what he believes is the etymology of the word *perichoresis*, the technical term that speaks of the coherence of the three persons of the Trinity. In Greek the prefix *peri* (as in *perimeter*) means "around", and *choresis* literally means "dancing" (as in *choreography*). This etymology is disputed, but the imagery is helpful. In this imagery the unity of the divine persons is found in their perichoretic communion, and their equality is stressed by allowing that each may take a turn in leading the dance.

Unit 4 – What is the Trinity in Whose Image We are Created? Part 2

Now we are going to a short excerpt from a book called, “The Shack”. This excerpt is taken from a novel about a man whose daughter is kidnapped and killed. Then God invites him (Mack) to spend a weekend with him to receive some healing. In this book, God’s character has taken the form of a large black woman that Mack calls “Papa”. This is explained earlier in the book as a kindness to Mack since his former image of God was a mean tyrant and God wants to help him rethink this. We won’t explain more about this book here, as it isn’t directly relevant to this portion we are reading.

Now, as you listen to this extract, notice the nature of the relationship between the members of the Trinity”.

“...Suddenly, a terrible crash broke into his reverie. It came from the direction of the kitchen, and Mack froze. For a moment there was dead silence, and then unexpectedly, he heard uproarious laughter. Curious, he exited the bathroom and poked his head through the doorway of the kitchen.

Mack was shocked at the scene in front of him. It appeared that Jesus had dropped a large bowl of some sort of batter or sauce on the floor and it was everywhere. It must have landed close to Papa (God) because the lower portion of her skirt and bare feet were covered in the gooey mess. All three were laughing so hard that Mack didn’t think they were breathing. Sarayu (Holy Spirit) said something about humans being clumsy and all three started roaring again. Finally, Jesus brushed past Mack and returned a minute later with a large basin of water and towels. Sarayu had already started wiping the goop from the floor and cupboards but Jesus went straight to Papa and, kneeling at her feet, began to wipe off the front of her clothes. He worked down to her feet and gently lifted one foot at a time which he directed into the basin where he cleaned and massaged it.

‘Ooooooh, that feels sooo good!’ exclaimed Papa, as she continued her tasks at the counter.

As he leaned against the doorway watching, Mack’s mind was full of thoughts. So this was God in relationship? It was so beautiful and so appealing. He knew it didn’t matter whose fault it was—the mess from some bowl had been broken, that a dish that had been planned would not be shared. Obviously, what was truly important here was the

love they had for one another and the fullness it brought them. He shook his head. How different this was from the way he treated the ones he loved!”

So, what are some of the descriptive words you would use to describe the relationships between members of the Trinity in this book?

Well, In the past others have said: Loving, kind, non-judgmental, serving one another and caring.

The authors of this course like this reading because it makes it so “down to earth” and practical. And it helps us to see how the model of the Trinity relating together helps us think about how we treat each other.

Now that we have looked at some different perspectives on the Trinity, if you were now going to diagram your understanding of how the members of the Trinity function together in relationship would it be different than your first drawing? How so?

Now, you do not need to do a new drawing if you still prefer your original drawing, or you could choose one of the drawings from the extract about Trinitariograms or do a new diagram yourself. Go to this module in your workbook and when you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

I would be very curious to know what your choice was here, but the important thing to understand here is that there is no right or wrong drawing, because these are just two dimensional representations of complex relationships. What is important, however, is to realize that the relationships within the Trinity should be a model for how we humans work and relate to each other.

Unit 5 – How does this relate to a Biblical understanding of gender roles?

Let’s start by thinking about the attitude of the heart that God desires in all relationships. Remember when we were reading Genesis 1 and 2?

The equality and mutuality between Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2 is quickly lost through the sin in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve hide themselves from God breaking that relationship. Then as the fruit is passed from Eve to Adam and Adam blames Eve when called into account by God for the act of sin, that relationship is also broken.

Fortunately through redemption in Jesus a different understanding of relationship is restored, enabled and reinforced throughout the New Testament. Matt 20:25-28 and Gal. 5:13 spell out with wonderful clarity. "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant..." "...serve one another humbly in love." Again the concept of mutuality, service to one another and humility are restored.

This looks very similar to what we were just discussing about how the members of the Trinity relate to one another.

Now, let's read John 1:1-5.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Now, in this passage, who do we understand "the Word" to be?

Well, that would be Jesus.

And what word images do you find here, and what do they tell you about the relationship between God and Jesus?

In the past others have said:

- Jesus has been there from the beginning
- With God and yet was God
- Through him all things were created
- In Him was life

The picture here is rich and full of imagery that reflects Jesus is God and is equal with God and the Holy Spirit. While there are several scriptures in the New Testament that indicate Jesus is in submission to God, they are all in reference to the time during which Jesus humbly chose to leave his position in heaven and temporarily become man. All other passages refer to the members of the Trinity as equals, in similar ways as does John 1.

Church tradition has also consistently argued that the members of the Trinity are equal in value and authority. Athanasius, Augustine, and John Calvin all made numerous statements to this effect to mention just a few.

Unit 6 – Egalitarians vs. Complementarians

In this unit we are going to introduce two opposing views on equality in relationships, which have created an interesting debate over the past 25 years in the US. These two views are known as ‘Egalitarianism’ and ‘Complementarianism’.

Both views agree that men and women have equal value before God and were created in the image of God—this is a uniquely Christian stand, which no other world religion agrees with. This belief is what drives Christians to stop the abortion of female fetuses and the trafficking of women.

What these two views disagree on is “how equal” men and women are!

Do you know the term Egalitarian and what it means?

Egalitarians are Bible believing Christians who believe the Bible teaches that men and women should take roles of leadership in the Church and the home based on their gifts, and not their gender. They believe the Bible does not teach different roles based on gender alone.

Do you know what the term Complementarian means? Complementarians are also Bible believing Christians but they believe that only men can take certain roles of leadership in the Church and home, based solely on their gender. They believe God values both women and men equally, but did not give them equal authority, or intend for women to play certain roles that are open to men.

The authors of this course are Egalitarians. They believe that the Complementarian position sounds a little too much like the message of the Apartheid years in South Africa, where the slogan was “separate but equal”. Or like the Southern part of the United States during the years when slavery was legal and the Church there made an airtight case that God intended black people to be slaves to white people. Complementarians will also at times argue that Jesus and the Holy Spirit do not hold equal authority with God, to uphold their argument about limited roles for women. This, of course, conflicts with the traditional understanding of the Trinity that we have been discussing.

We do not have time to go more deeply into this issue in this course, but for more information on this subject visit the website for the organization, Christians for Biblical Equality at: www.cbeinternational.org

Do you remember our discussion in module 1 about what you believe matters? Why did we say that it matters?

Well you may remember that the central reason it matters is that; what you believe impacts what you do!

But remember that Bible believing Christians can and will disagree with each other on very important issues. Even if we disagree it is important to always treat each other with respect, and not question each other's love for Jesus or passion for the Bible just because we have not reached the same conclusion about something it says.

Unit 7 – Mystery in the Trinity

Accepting that there is mystery in the Trinity is only accepting that we cannot possibly understand in our own humanity how the three can be one, functioning in a harmony that does not require eternal subordination. Do they play different roles at times, that require them to submit, humble themselves, become slaves and servants and fulfill different functions? Of course!

Is it possible for men and women to function in harmony using their God given gifts to serve and enable one another to fulfill our callings under God without strife and struggle for power and control? Humanly speaking probably not, but it does seem to be what God intended at creation!

This is nearly impossible for us as human beings—outside of the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Human history testifies to this. Yet the Trinity holds up a standard that acts like a mirror in our daily lives, revealing our shortcomings while encouraging us with its supernatural implications of fulfilling this calling to live in His image.

Let's look again at what God intended at creation, before sin had entered the world.

Now, let's read Genesis 2 again, and then I'll have 2 questions for you.

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. 2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

4 This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

5 Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, 6 but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. 7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

So the first question I have for you is: why did God create women?

Well, the answer is simply stated in verse 18 “it is not good for man to be alone”. No more and no less...

Now, let’s review Genesis 2:18 – 20. 18

18 The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

So the second question I have for you is: what do you believe God meant by the term “helper”?

You may have been taught that “helper” meant “servant,” someone inferior. BUT it actually means “partner.” Looking at the Hebrew, the words for “helper” here mean “one to help the helpless or one who needs help.” There is no suggestion of submission or servant but rather an adequate strong partner to pull half the weight, of similar and equal ability.

The same Hebrew word is only used eighteen other times in the Old Testament according to Bible scholars. Fifteen of those eighteen times it is used to refer to God as the helper - the other three refer to man as an ineffectual helper – For example, David said, “my help comes from the Lord,” or Psalms 30:10; 115:10; 146:5; Exodus 18:4 etc. Each time it is used to refer to help coming from a superior strength. Keep in mind this is the same word God chose to use to describe Eve.

Eve was designed for relationship with Adam because it was not good for him to be alone. She was designed to work with him, to provide help and as we've seen already in Genesis 1:26 – 28 rule and reign with him.

Unit 8 – Patriarchy and the Bible Part 1

What does the term Patriarchal mean? If we say that a culture is a Patriarchy what does that imply?

Well, the clearest meaning is that a patriarchal culture is one in which men are assumed to be the only ones able to play leadership roles. It literally means, "Father rule".

In a Patriarchal culture boys and men all receive the message that there are three key roles for them to play. As one author recently put it, this patriarchal culture tells men that they must be the protector, provider and impregnator and the opposite of women.

There are two destructive sides of this message for men. First of all, it appeals to man's sin nature because it encourages men to believe that they are in charge of their own lives, in a power position over others and have privileges that women do not! All of us want to believe we are stronger, more powerful and more privileged than someone else. And of course, we want to protect those privileges. This would appeal to the power motivated side of any human being!

Additionally, it is destructive because at times it is just impossible for boys or men to protect those they love, provide for their needs, or enable their wives to become pregnant.

For example, one of the authors of this course met a young pastor who told her about being an 8-year-old boy and being forced to watch as his mother was raped to death by a band of men who had broken into their home. He had never been able to forgive himself for not protecting her although of course there was nothing he could have done because of his age. As a result, he had become a violent teenager to "prove" his manhood to himself and others. This resulted in him harming many others before he came to faith. Even now as a pastor, he dreamed of killing the men who had hurt his mother, even though he knew he should try to find a way to forgive them.

The patriarchal cultural message is as destructive for men as it is for women. On the one hand it justifies them fighting for power and position and protecting the privileges they hold. On the other hand, men try so hard to prove their manhood according to cultural norms but then often “fail” in some way, leaving them damaged for life and questioning why they are a failure.

There is a continuum of standards about what it means to really be a “man” in various Patriarchal cultures, from violent radicals like ISIS or Boko Haram to a gentler version in some Western cultures. But in every patriarchal culture, if men MUST rule—whether in government, the Church or the home—then anything that threatens a man’s place of authority also jeopardizes his manhood.

Now, turn to your workbooks for this module and answer the following 2 questions:

1. Is the culture in which you are living generally a Patriarchal Culture according to the following definition: “a patriarchal culture is one in which men are assumed to be the main ones able to play leadership roles. It literally means ‘Father rule’.”
2. If so, where would you identify your culture to be on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being a radical violent culture like ISIS or Boko Haram, and with 1 being a tolerant Western European culture. Draw your result on the scale in your workbooks and continue with the next unit when you are finished.

Unit 9 – Patriarchy and the Bible Part 2

With the previous exercise, there are no wrong answers. The goal is for you to identify what you think about your own culture on this issue.

Let’s think together for a moment, does this Patriarchal perspective of a man’s role match with God’s intention according to what we just read in Genesis 2: 18-20?

No, not really. You need to remember that men and women were designed to share the responsibility of ruling the earth, and that is only to be done as they relate to God who is the one in charge.

While the Bible spans thousands of years, most of the stories in it are set in Patriarchal cultures and this is often what we find confusing. Just because the Bible stories took

place in a Patriarchal culture, does not mean that the Patriarchal culture is God's highest and best model.

We'll continue exploring this throughout the course, but let's look at this question in light of a fascinating Biblical account of a man and woman in a highly Patriarchal setting, working together, using their unique gifts and positions to save their people. Neither one of them could have done this alone yet working closely together they accomplished God's will.

Let's start by looking at Chapter 1 of Esther so that we get the setting.

1 This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: 2 At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, 3 and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present.

4 For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty. 5 When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king's palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa. 6 The garden had hangings of white and blue linen, fastened with cords of white linen and purple material to silver rings on marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and other costly stones. 7 Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality. 8 By the king's command each guest was allowed to drink with no restrictions, for the king instructed all the wine stewards to serve each man what he wished.

9 Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.

10 On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Karkas— 11 to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. 12 But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.

13 Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times 14 and were closest to the king—Karshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memukan, the seven nobles

of Persia and Media who had special access to the king and were highest in the kingdom.

15 "According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?" he asked. "She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her."

16 Then Memukan replied in the presence of the king and the nobles, "Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes. 17 For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.' 18 This very day the Persian and Median women of the nobility who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be no end of disrespect and discord.

19 "Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she. 20 Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest."

21 The king and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memukan proposed. 22 He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his own household, using his native tongue.

So the first question I have for you is: would you describe this as a Patriarchal culture? Yes or course. The King is in charge and everyone including his wife must do what he says. Women do not seem to have any voice. Verse 22 clarifies this as well.

What seems to be mostly highly valued in the Kingdom beyond Patriarchy?

Well, based on the first few verses, wealth, wine and women!

When Queen Vashti refused to come and be "displayed" before the room full of drunken men, what was the greatest concern of all the advisors and "wise" men?

The greatest concern that the advisors had was that women throughout the kingdom would disrespect and disobey their husbands following Vashti's example!

And what was the goal of the royal decree concerning Vashti?

That every man should be ruler over his own household.

In summary, this is an incredibly wealthy Patriarchal culture, where vast banquets, wine drinking, beautiful women and decadence of all kinds abounded.

Now let's read Esther 2:1-18 so that we get the setting of how Mordecai and Esther enter the story.

2 Later when King Xerxes' fury had subsided, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what he had decreed about her. 2 Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. 3 Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. 4 Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.

5 Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, 6 who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. 7 Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

8 When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. 9 She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem.

10 Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. 11 Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

12 Before a young woman's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. 13 And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace.

14 In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

15 When the turn came for Esther (the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won

the favor of everyone who saw her. 16 She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. 17 Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.

So, first question: What do we know about the Jews at this point? Why are they in this place?

They are in captivity, stolen from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. So they are political refugees, captives.

How did Esther end up in the King's harem? Was this a choice she made?

It sounds like there was no choice. She is beautiful and therefore, was "taken".

How does Esther end up as Queen?

The King finds her the most attractive, she wins everyone's favor and as a result gets special treatment

We don't have time to read the whole book, even though every twist and turn of the plot is fascinating. If you remember Haman is jealous of Mordecai and angry that he won't bow down to him. As a result, Haman manipulates the king to let him decree that all Jews will be killed. But Mordecai and Esther work together to prevent this plot that would result in God's people being wiped out and God's plan for redemption destroyed.

In our next unit, let's see what we can learn about Mordecai and Esther, and how they worked together.

Unit 10 – Patriarchy and the Bible Part 3

Now, let's continue to read about Esther and Mordecai. First, let's re-read Esther 2: 5-18.

5 Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, 6 who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin[a] king of Judah. 7 Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had

brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

8 When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. 9 She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven female attendants selected from the king's palace and moved her and her attendants into the best place in the harem.

10 Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. 11 Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.

12 Before a young woman's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics. 13 And this is how she would go to the king: Anything she wanted was given her to take with her from the harem to the king's palace.

14 In the evening she would go there and in the morning return to another part of the harem to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the concubines. She would not return to the king unless he was pleased with her and summoned her by name.

15 When the turn came for Esther (the young woman Mordecai had adopted, the daughter of his uncle Abihail) to go to the king, she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested. And Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. 16 She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. 18 And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.

So the first question I have for you is: What do we know about Esther's relationship with Mordecai?

Well, we know Mordecai took in Esther as an orphan and that she was the daughter of his uncle Abihail.

What do we know about her role in the palace?

She becomes the favorite of the King and was made queen.

And what do we know about her character?

Esther is wise and listens to others and has a way of winning their respect. She is also beautiful, but so are all the other girls in the haram, so what seems to make her special is her humility, respect for others, and ability to listen.

Now, let's read Esther 2:5-7, 21-23

5 Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, 6 who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin[a] king of Judah. 7 Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.

21 During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. 22 But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. 23 And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

So, remember as we learned earlier, Mordecai took in Esther as an orphan and she was the daughter of his uncle Abihail.

What do we learn about what kind of man he is?

Mordecai is kind and merciful, having adopted an orphaned child. He is wealthy or he wouldn't be sitting at the gate in a place of honor. He is honest and loyal to the King, in spite of the King being the leader of a country into which Mordecai was captured.

Unit 11 – Patriarchy and the Bible Part 4

Now, let's read more about Esther and Mordecai. We will read:
Esther 2:19 – 23, Esther 4, Esther 8 and Esther 9:29 -32.

19 When the virgins were assembled a second time, Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. 20 But Esther had kept secret her family background and nationality just as Mordecai had told her to do, for she continued to follow Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up.

21 During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. 22 But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. 23 And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.

1 When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. 2 But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. 3 In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes. 4 When Esther's eunuchs and female attendants came and told her about Mordecai, she was in great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. 5 Then Esther summoned Hathak, one of the king's eunuchs assigned to attend her, and ordered him to find out what was troubling Mordecai and why.

6 So Hathak went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. 7 Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. 8 He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

9 Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. 10 Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, 11 "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."

12 When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, 13 he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

17 So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.

1 That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. 2 The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman's estate.

3 Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. 4 Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him.

5 "If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. 6 For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"

7 King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. 8 Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."

9 At once the royal secretaries were summoned—on the twenty-third day of the third month, the month of Sivan. They wrote out all Mordecai's orders to the Jews, and to the satraps, governors and nobles of the 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush. These orders were written in the script of each province and the language of each people and also to the Jews in their own script and language. 10 Mordecai wrote in the name of King Xerxes, sealed the dispatches with the king's signet ring, and sent them by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king.

11 The king's edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves; to destroy, kill and annihilate the armed men of any nationality or province who might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies. 12 The day appointed for the Jews to do this in all the provinces of King Xerxes was the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar. 13 A copy of the text of the edict was to be issued as law in every province and made known to the people of every nationality so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

14 The couriers, riding the royal horses, went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa.

15 When Mordecai left the king's presence, he was wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a

joyous celebration. 16 For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. 17 In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

29 So Queen Esther, daughter of Abihail, along with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter concerning Purim. 30 And Mordecai sent letters to all the Jews in the 127 provinces of Xerxes' kingdom—words of goodwill and assurance— 31 to establish these days of Purim at their designated times, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had decreed for them, and as they had established for themselves and their descendants in regard to their times of fasting and lamentation. 32 Esther's decree confirmed these regulations about Purim, and it was written down in the records.

There are so many things in these passages, but let's start by looking at this first question. What words could best describe how Esther and Mordecai worked together throughout this story. Well, in the past others have used words like:

Mutual respect

Encouragement

Obedience to each other

Listening carefully to each other

Honesty and integrity

Shared leadership

Protecting each other

Generosity towards each other

Taking turns making the leadership decisions based on who was in the best position at that time to do so.

Remember that these are many of the same attributes that we found in the way that the members of the Trinity relate to each other and work together.

Now for our second question: What are some of the results of Esther and Mordecai working together in leadership.

Well, in the past others have said:

The saving of God's people

Joy

Conversions of others to become Jews

Wealth and position

More leadership

In summary it is amazing what can happen when Godly men and women work together in leadership in obedience to God and to each other! They can even take over leadership of an ungodly, patriarchal culture!

Unit 12 – Final Exercise

Now for the final exercise of this module, I want you to turn in to your student workbook and work on answers to the following two questions. To answer these two questions, you will need to reference the definition of the Trinitarian relational attributes that you will find noted there.

First question: Where are the Trinitarian relational attributes described in this unit: Visible or not visible in your family life. Describe this by sharing one or two examples.

Second question: Where are the Trinitarian relational attributes described in this unit: Visible or not visible in the organization where you work. Describe this by sharing one or two examples.

Module 3
God's Perfect Plan for Us to Rule His
Garden

Unit 1 – What does created in “our image” really mean?

In Unit 2 we looked carefully at Genesis 1 and 2 and discussed in depth the picture created here of God’s perfect plan for how we relate to one another and to God based on the fact that we were made in Their image, the model of the Trinity.

Now we will look carefully at the task he gave to both men and women by giving them a common call to rule over the earth and the authority they needed to take up that role of ruling over the earth.

So, what does Created in “our image” really mean?

Let’s take a moment and go back and read Gen 1:26-28 again. As we are reading it, think about this question: How does being created in “our image” and the task of ruling relate in this passage?

26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

So the question was: What does being created “our” image have to do with the task of ruling? Well, here is what others have said in the past.

We are created in His image so that we can rule over the rest of creation.

Something about being created in His image enables us to rule in a way that will please God.

Many of the characteristics of the Trinity inform not only how we relate to one another and to Him, but also how we should rule.

We have many God-like features, such as free-will and a spiritual nature that none of the other creatures had. Men and women are unique because ONLY man and woman were made in the image of God.

It is critical to understand that ONLY man and woman were made in the image of God. No other part of creation was made in the image of God. And being made in His image is what enables us to rule on His behalf.

Now we are going to look at another passage from Genesis to find out about the substance from which we are made and why that matters. Let's read Genesis 2:20-24.

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

"This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called 'woman,'
for she was taken out of man."

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

So, the question I have for you is: What did you find here about the nature of woman?

Well, others in the past have said:

That the woman was created from the same thing as man,

That she is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

That a man and woman are from the same substance.

This isn't about whether it was a rib, or a piece of his head, or a toe, etc. Men don't have one less rib than women, as one rabbinical writing tries to prove.

If there is symbolism here, it is about being side-by-side and equal partners. It's about flesh of my flesh. Eve was fashioned from Adam, not from dust as a separate animal, but rather from the same substance and nature as man. Men and women are of equal material and substance. It's a reinforcement of Genesis 1:26-28, that man and woman are uniquely created, of the same substance, and in the image of God, unlike the other creatures. No other religion believes this!

Unit 2 – Paganism versus Christian Thought on Creation

If we start to deny this quality of woman (that she is created from the same substance as man), we are actually reflecting paganism; this is why the biblical account is so graphic about what woman was created from.

Greek poetry and philosophy which forms much of the basis for Western thought tell about the origin of mankind and the gods. One of the most famous poems, "The Theogony" by Hesiod provided the basis for Greek thinking on this issue and was studied like a history book by the Greeks for centuries.

According to Hesiod, men lived on earth and all was perfect. But then Prometheus (a man) stole fire from the Olympian gods. Zeus conceived the most horrifying punishment possible for Prometheus, something that would be both irresistible, but causing endless pain—woman, Pandora was the first.

Do you know the story of Pandora's box? It contained every kind of evil and trouble possible for mankind. This was the "gift" of woman to men of earth from Zeus!

There could not be a story more opposite than this Greek story of the creation of woman, from the story of the creation of Eve by God to be Adam's companion. In Greek mythology woman is created to be a "pleasant poison" she was made with a "shameless mind and deceitful nature", a "hopeless snare."

Now I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module and answer these two questions:

Describe in your own words the basic differences between the Genesis account of the creation of women and this Greek account of the creation of women.

And which version is most closely reflected in the way women are treated and portrayed in your culture? When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Here are some answers to the first question that others have come up with in the past:

In Genesis, woman is a gift to man by a kind and loving God who does not want him to suffer any more from being alone.

In Greek poetry, woman is a curse sent on man to punish him.

While each culture is different, it is not hard to see that in some cultures, women are often perceived as the Greek authors saw them, sub-human, and a beautiful and difficult to resist, source of evil.

Like the Greek culture, in the Roman culture it was no better, women were seen as basically evil. Doing evil to them was not unjust, but actually their just reward! Greek and Roman culture are the basis for Western culture, and influential throughout cultures globally.

The second question was: Can you think of any examples from your culture or another culture that reflect this concept of women being inherently evil or worthless?

One example that we have heard, is that in many cultures there is the idea that women only have value through their association with man, with their father when they are young, and with a husband when they are older. In many cultures it is thought to be a shame if a woman is single.

This idea of a woman needing an association with a man to have value forms the basis for the practice of widow burning in India. Just a few years ago there, a widow jumped (or was thrown) on the fire burning the body of her dead husband at his funeral, because she literally no longer had value if her husband was dead.

Unit 3 – The Mandate of Dominion

Let's go back once more to Genesis. Let's look at Genesis 1:26-28 one more time. As you are reading it, think about this question: Who did God intend to rule over the earth and everything in it?

26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

So what do you see as the answer to the question: Who did God intend to rule over the earth and everything in it?

Well, the answer is that men AND women were equally created for dominion over the entire earth, just as they were equally created for relationship with God and with each other.

It's good to see and understand that both dominion and relationship are characteristics of God and both man and woman were made for both.

Gen 1:28-30 shows there is a mutuality of ruling. Man and woman shared a common destiny, because they had a common creator and a common call. Authority was delegated equally to them. Let me say it again, they have a common creator and a common destiny.

Now, let's look at Genesis 1:31. It says:

"And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning - the sixth day."

This is the complete picture, that all of His creation is VERY GOOD. It is God's perfect will and His perfect plans. This was His intention for the earth and His creation, that His Kingdom would be perfectly reflected.

Now I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module and look at the following six questions that are there.

- What did existence in the Garden of Eden look like in that week after creation, the time between Genesis 2 and Genesis 3?
- If you had to use your imagination to describe it, what would you say?
- What did the garden itself look like?
- How did the animals relate to one another?
- What did God want Adam and Eve to do all day?
- What was their relationship?

Take your time with this exercise and when you have completed it, click the continue button.

This is a hard exercise because what we know from scripture is so limited, and yet here is what we do know:

- That it was beautiful.
- That there were some rules and structure because God had laid down His rules about the trees that were not to be eaten from.
- There must have been peace and harmony

- There was incredible innocence because we know that the man and woman had no idea that they needed clothes.
- That Adam and Eve had an amazing relationship with God because he was accustomed to walking and talking with them freely in the Garden in the cool of the day. Although we struggle to understand how that must have felt, because we now have relationship with Him again through Jesus blood, we do have a glimmer of what that must have been like and we can be sure it was amazing!

But then we had the question, what did they do all day? Did you struggle with this? I hope you thought that they must have been creating things; songs, art, expressions of their praise for God—because since they have God’s characteristics they must have had God’s creative abilities.

Probably our greatest clues of what they were doing come from the New Testament when Jesus tells us about the coming of the Kingdom of God. When he taught us to pray he said, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” just as it was initially in the Garden.

What do you think working relationships were like in the garden before the fall? Here is what some others have said in the past:

- That they desperately need each other because God said it was not good to be alone
- That they shared the task of subduing the earth, the task they were both created for.
- And that they are to help and serve each other following the model of the Trinity, the model which they were created in the image of.

We have nothing else to work from without adding something, which does not exist into the text here. We only know that we have two beings made of the same substance and designed and equally charged to rule and reign over all of creation working in perfect harmony with no power disputes. This is what working relationships in the Garden of Eden must have looked like!

Unit 4 – Is God Male or Female?

Now let me ask you a really controversial question? Is God male or female?

I want you to do this exercise in your workbooks. First, I want you to re-read Genesis 1:27. Then read the following scriptures and compare the images in those scriptures, which describe God.

Psalms 103:13

Psalms 18:10,14

Isaiah 54:4-5

Isaiah 49:14,15

Deuteronomy 32:18

Hosea 11:9

Once you have completed this turn to your workbooks for this module and write down your answers to the following questions: Is God male or female? Why do you believe these different and possibly confusing images are used to describe God and His feelings for us? When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Genesis 1:27

27 So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Psalms 103:13

13 As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

Psalms 18:10,14

10 He mounted the cherubim and flew;
he soared on the wings of the wind.

14 He shot his arrows and scattered the enemy,
with great bolts of lightning he routed them.

Isaiah 54:4-5

4 "Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame.
Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.

You will forget the shame of your youth
and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.
5 For your Maker is your husband—
the Lord Almighty is his name—
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
he is called the God of all the earth.

Isaiah 49:14,15

14 But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me,
the Lord has forgotten me.
15 "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget,
I will not forget you!

Deuteronomy 32:18

18 You deserted the Rock, who fathered you;
you forgot the God who gave you birth.

Hosea 11:9

9 I will not carry out my fierce anger,
nor will I devastate Ephraim again.
For I am God, and not a man—
the Holy One among you.
I will not come against their cities.

Module 4

Tragedy and Redemption

Unit 1 – Everything in Our World Is Broken

We are now beginning the 4th module in this course. The title of this module is “Tragedy and Redemption”.

Can you guess what we are going to cover?

Yes, the fall, as well as Jesus death on the cross for our sins.

We need to look at how everything went wrong after creation and everything we saw from the last session that was “very good”, and the consequences of that. And then we will look at how God has already brought restoration through sending his own son. And of course, we will look at this specifically through the lens of how it has impacted the relationships between women and men.

To begin this, we are going look at another segment of our Case Study and find out more about what is happening to Rebecca.

Rebecca’s Calling Confirmed

On Sunday Pastor Thomas sought Rebecca out after church to apologize for the outcome of the meeting earlier in the week. He assured her that he and the other leaders still needed her input and advice, even though now it would have to be delivered in a more “informal” way. Though Rebecca certainly appreciated his words, they left her feeling rather confused and frustrated. She felt as though she was back on the soccer field, recognized as one of the better players, but unable to fully participate solely because of her gender.

She was grateful, however, that at least the door was still open for some participation with the church leaders, because she couldn’t get the poor women and children in the slum so very near the church building off her mind. She still hoped to engage the church in an outreach of some type to that slum. She decided before presenting the idea to the leaders that she should first of all make a visit to the slum, talk with some of the women and have them tell her their needs from their perspective.

Though she rode the bus past that area every day, she had to admit she had never actually made a visit there. She lived in a very nice section of the city, new and slightly outside of the noise and heat. Her job as a doctor enabled her to afford a nice, though

fairly simple existence. All of her friends, of course, were in a similar position. It didn't really occur to her until she got off the bus in front of the slum district how little she knew about this area she passed daily.

The first things that assaulted her were the heat and the smells. As she began to walk into the area of crowded houses, the putrid odour of rotting food mixed with that of urine and human waste rushed up to meet her. As the flies buzzed around her face, she felt her stomach tighten and her head felt a little light. Barefoot children were everywhere, holding out their hands, reaching for her bright dress and beginning to form a small parade around her as she continued slowly. Even her medical experience hadn't really prepared her for everything she encountered.

A woman, bent nearly double, slowly sweeping the dirt in front of her shack looked up as she passed, and their eyes met. Rebecca thought she had never seen such pools of misery. Though at first glance Rebecca assumed she was very old, as she looked more closely, she realized that she was in fact quite young, though very thin and with skin sagging loosely from her bones.

Rebecca stopped and began to engage her in conversation. Although reluctant at first, the woman began to pour out her story in response to Rebecca's sensitive questions. She and her two children had followed her husband to the city after he had moved there to find work several months earlier. When they arrived, they found that rather than find them an apartment as promised, he had moved in with a woman he had met and all of the money he was supposedly saving had gone to buy the local liquor. Having nowhere to live but no money to return to the village, she sold the only thing she had—herself, in order to buy the children food and find them shelter. Weeks later she still had no other source of income and she seemed to be too ill much of the time to "work". Though neither she nor Rebecca voiced it, they both realized that she probably had contracted HIV-AIDS through her prostitution and would now not have long to live.

Rebecca continued through the dirt paths speaking to one person after another. The stories all differed slightly, but misery and hopelessness permeated each. By the time Rebecca left as night was falling, she was nearly overwhelmed by all she had encountered. It was only after she was safely back in her own home, sipping a cool and refreshing fresh lime soda, did she begin to summon the energy to process all that she had heard.

Questions filled her mind. Why the misery? Why the poverty? Didn't God care about these helpless women and children? Why did her culture give so little value to human

life, especially the lives of women and children? Why weren't the social services doing something to help? Why did she have such a comfortable life by comparison? What should the Church's role be in this situation? How could the church building sit so geographically nearby, yet seem hundreds of kilometres away culturally and economically? What should she do? What should they do?

She fell into an exhausted and fitful sleep that night with many more questions than answers. As the ceiling fan swirled overhead, she realized that now she felt more responsibility than ever to involve the church in finding ways to meet some of these needs.

Are there similar neighbourhoods in your country? Do you believe God cares about these men, women and children and their suffering?

These are the topics we are going to talk about in this session.

In the earlier sessions we looked at the creation story and why God created both men and women. As we saw there, it was His purpose to reflect His own image in them and for them to rule over this earth. In other words, they had a common Creator and a common destiny. It is incredibly important that we understand that and use that as the foundation to continue this study.

Unit 2 – What is Our Worldview?

In this module we are going to look at other very familiar passages about "The fall" from Genesis and the Redemption provided by Jesus' death. Both are very familiar stories, but we need to "put on different glasses" as we read them today. These glasses are like our worldview.

Imagine you have a room full of people and you ask for four volunteers who are wearing glasses to come to the front of the room. Then you ask each one take off their glasses and trade them with someone else. Then ask them to describe how they are seeing now through someone else's glasses. It is probably substantially different and probably distorted.

Just like everyone sees things differently depending upon the glasses they are looking through, each of us sees the issues impacting how men and women relate to each other depending upon their worldview.

What is a “worldview”? Does everyone have a “worldview”? What are some of the things that shape our “worldview”?

- Well, a worldview is the framework by which we interpret reality. It affects how we see and understand things, just as much as trading glasses with someone.
- A worldview is different than glasses because we cannot “take off” our worldview. It is a part of us.
- A worldview is made up of our culture, our upbringing and experiences, the beliefs of those around us and what we have been taught.
- Everyone has a worldview, but we might not even be aware of ours because it is a little like asking a fish to describe the water it swims in!

Most Christian leaders take the worldview of the culture around them on the subject of how men and women relate to one another, find some scriptures that seem to support that view, and then feel like they are living out Biblical truth. To be honest that is the way we often deal with many Biblical issues and challenges not just the issue of gender. An example of this is the American church and slavery 100 years ago. Using the scripture: “slaves submit to your masters...” Christian leaders preached that slavery was a Biblical institution!

But the Church was designed to be counter-cultural. To live by a different set of rules and reflect the values of the Kingdom of God, rather than just absorbing the values of the culture it finds itself in.

The New Testament tells us to be in the world but not of it and that is the great challenge we face. How to live “set apart” for God, yet not isolate ourselves from the rest of the world, while on the other hand not mixing so completely that we blend in and no one sees a difference, because in fact there is none!

Unit 3 – The “Fall”

Now, as we read some very familiar passages again, see if you see different things in them this time as you read them. Maybe things that are different than what you’ve been taught that they say!

As we saw in module 1, men and women have a common Creator and common destiny. Now we’ll look at the shared tragedy they experienced and the blessing of a shared redemption from that tragedy that God provided.

Now, let’s look at the following passage from Genesis 3:1-14.

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all livestock

and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

After reading this scripture, how does this leave you feeling?

Well, others have said:

- Miserable
- Sad
- And that it's such a tragic story

This is truly the most tragic story in the entire Scripture. Man and woman have walked and talked in the Garden with God. They were created to be in communion with Him and with each other, and to take dominion over all of God's creation. They have just begun to fulfill that destiny when tragedy strikes. If you can read this chapter without incredible sadness you have missed the point. For man and woman to willingly choose evil instead of fulfilling their destiny is surely the most tragic story of this world—and it's repeated daily through our world as people are given the opportunity to choose Christ and salvation and, instead, turn their backs and choose evil.

Both Adam and Eve turned their backs to their Creator's blessing by acts of their free will.

Now, turn to your workbooks for this module and answer the following questions: Could Adam have been present when the serpent was tempting Eve? Why did Adam eat of the fruit? Let's re-read through Genesis 3, and also refer back to Genesis 2:15-17.

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

Genesis 2:15-17

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take

care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Well, do you think Adam was present when Eve was being tempted by the serpent?

Here is what some have said in the past:

- We just don't know.
- There is a lot of reason to think that possibly Adam was present. If we could read Hebrew, we would notice that the word "you" in verses 3, 4, and 5 of Genesis 3 is plural. That could indicate that the serpent was talking to more than one person.
- Genesis 3:6 says that Eve gave the fruit to her husband, so he might not have been very far away. Did she just turn and give it to him or did she have to go find him?

It is possible to make a good argument either way on this question. But, either way, we know from Genesis 2:16,17 that Adam had clear instructions from God about not eating the fruit. So either he was tempted by the serpent's words and ate for that reason, or he just did it because Eve asked him to, even though he knew better.

Now I want you to read and compare Genesis 3:2,3 and Genesis 2:15-17. Then I'll have two questions for you to answer in your workbooks.

Genesis 3:2,3

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,
3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

Genesis 2:15-17

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

So the questions are: Do you see any discrepancy here?

Do you think Eve heard the instructions directly from God for herself, or did Adam hear them and tell her?

When you have completed your answers, click continue.

Others have said in the past that:

- It is hard to know for sure.
- From the order of the story in Genesis 2, it is certainly easy to assume that Eve did not hear those instructions from God because she was not yet created when he gave them, however, we don't know for sure.
- The serpent chose to tempt Eve because she had less direct information on the subject. That she was working on second-hand information rather than first-hand information and therefore the serpent guessed she might be a bit more vulnerable. Again however, this is conjecture and the truth is - we literally do not know.

More important than our conclusions about where Adam was or whether Eve heard the instructions firsthand, is who did God hold guilty for eating of the fruit?

Let's read Genesis 3:11-19 and then I'll have a question for you.

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

15
And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

16 To the woman he said,
"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about
which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'
"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

18
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.

19
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return."

So my question is: Who did God hold guilty for eating of the fruit? Why? Turn to your workbooks and when you have completed this exercise, click continue.

What conclusions did you reach?

Well, it's pretty clear that:

- Both are held guilty by God

When you read through that passage, it's very, very clear that God did not blame just one or the other of them, but He held them both equally responsible. What is also tragic to note is that the consequences of this sin both destroys the perfect male / female relationship and introduces shame, blame and manipulation into that relationship. You can see that in verse 12, when Adam basically says, "It's the woman's fault." It also destroys the perfect communion between people and God, which can be seen in verse 8, when the man and woman hid themselves from God, something they had never considered doing before. The result of sin is always broken relationships.

Now let's read through Genesis 3:14-19 one more time and then I have another question for you.

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

15

And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

16 To the woman he said,

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

18

It will produce thorns and thistles for you,

and you will eat the plants of the field.

19

By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”

Now I want you to think carefully here. Exactly what and who did God curse as the result of the sin of Adam and Eve?

Review the scripture if you need to and give that question some thought. Click continue when you are ready to proceed.

Well, the best answer is God cursed only the serpent and the ground;
Not the man or the woman

The only times the word curse is actually used is in regard to the serpent and the ground. It does not say that Adam or Eve was cursed as a result of their sin. Let me repeat that—the curse was:

Only on the serpent and the ground,
Not on the man or woman.

Let’s consider this a little deeper. Is there a difference between a curse and consequences of sin? I’m not enough of a theologian to know, but I do know that what occurs in verses 16-19 is a description of the consequences of their sin. There were certainly consequences that changed the way men and women would live and relate to each other and to God.

Now, based on what you read in verses 16-19, do you feel that it is God’s perfect will for the husband to rule over the wife, or is it a description of the consequences of sin?

That’s right, it is just the description of the tragic consequences of sin. It would be wrong to interpret Genesis 3:16 as if it reveals the will of a God rather than it revealing the fruit of sin, which is never the will of God. Nowhere in the Old Testament writings is there any divine injunction for wives to be in servitude to their husbands, let alone to other men.

The result of sin at the fall is that the purposes for which men and women were created in the first place are both disrupted.

Do you remember what those two primary purposes were? Why were Man and Woman were created?

They were created to be in:

- Relationship with God and each other
- And to take dominion over the earth

We know that the Fall spoiled Adam and Eve's relationship with God. If we read the rest of chapter 3, we find God had to drive them out of the Garden and they lost the chance to walk and talk face to face with God there. And the relationship between them changed as well. We see this in how they start blaming each other.

But let's look at the dominion purpose too because sin also interfered here. One theologian, Dr. Mary Stewart Van Leeuvan, in her book "Grace and Gender", has put it this way:

For men: The man's abuse—dominion becomes domination. The man let his relationship with Eve overcome his sense of good and evil. The relationship aspect that he was created for got out of balance and, therefore, he lost some of that instinct. Therefore, the other role, dominion, has become all consuming. In men, the God-given power and freedom to exercise accountable dominion over creation is abused. The propensity in men is to let their dominion run wild, to impose it in cavalier and illegitimate ways, not only on the earth and on other men, but also upon the person who is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

For women: On the other hand, woman's sin was to take too much dominion. Eve ate the fruit because the serpent convinced her that it would give her more power and make her like God. The resulting consequence was to lose her place and drive for dominion in the good sense. She became too consumed with the relational aspects of her calling. In women, the God-given desire for union and intimacy becomes all-consuming. The female sin is to use the preservation of relationships as an excuse not to exercise accountable dominion in the first place. The temptation is to avoid taking risks that might upset relationships.

While this may be a huge generalization, it is often exactly what is portrayed in today's popular culture as the ideal. Do any movie characters come to mind that illustrate this imbalance?

Some that others have thought of included:

- James Bond versus his leading lady or Miss Money Penny
- Shahrukh Khan and his many leading ladies
- Cinderella and Prince Charming

And how are these characters portrayed?

Well, the men are all powerful, often violent, able to do all sorts of amazing and super-hero things. But, the women, while at times occasionally viewed as intelligent or capable, are usually portrayed as pre-occupied with "getting" the man, being manipulative, and usually need to be rescued.

This 'super-hero' image that we have described – do you think it looks much the same in different cultures? In which cultures might it look different?

Here is what some people have said in the past:

- It looks much the same in societies which perpetuate patriarchal influences
- It looks different in the West and Northern European countries where gender equality is encouraged
- In strong patriarchal cultures, where masculine and feminine images are polar opposites the 'super-hero' / macho image is more clearly defined through social roles and expectations.
- It can look different in the city from the outer regions of the same country where culture takes longer to change

Where it is stronger/clearer, masculinity can more easily be threatened -'the higher they rise the harder they fall'. Lets think about the possible outcomes of this threat to the identities men may have developed as they grew up:

Think about the kind of disappointments men may face in your culture. What are some of these?

Well, over the years people have mentioned:

- Losing their job;
- Being on the losing side in a sports match;
- Failing to find a girlfriend;
- Finding themselves unable to pay the bride price or father children?
- Aging and losing their physical prowess

In these situations, is there cultural pressure to maintain the strong man image? Does a sense of powerlessness negatively impact their sense of identity and their relationships as they attempt to compensate?

I think in both cases the answer is – yes. Notice how the system of patriarchy in which men hold more status, power and privilege can make them vulnerable as well, with the imposition of intense rules and norms that they are compelled to live by. See how destructive it can become?

Let's read the following extract from a book called: 'Malestrom: manhood swept into the currents of a changing world'. The author, Carolyn Custis James describes the particular ways in which the Fall impacts men, causing them to lose their identities and their sense of purpose according to God's original vision for his sons.

"The need to establish and maintain one's manhood drives men into violent actions and exerts constant pressure for men to prove themselves, It fuels aggression, competition, and self-interest, and creates countless casualties at the giving and receiving ends of violence and injustice".

This violence is not just directed toward women: other men struggle in the same downward currents of injustice and humiliation. The impact of these invariably leaves them desperate to prove themselves or be left feeling less of a man: they lose sight of on their 'son-ship in Christ'. And it can end up hurting everyone.

As we finish this unit, think about how the problem of stereotyping and the resulting vulnerability impact relationships between husbands and wives, families, the church and the community?

Unit 4 – Violence in Families

As we begin this unit, I want to give you the results of a survey about violence in families.

In contemplating the need to bring gender “justice”, and why all of this matters, the Micah Network shared the results of this recent study in their August 2015 newsletter:

“A recent study from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey considered data from 7,806 men across eight countries, to examine the risk factors influencing men to be violent towards their partners. The data came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), India, Mexico, and Rwanda.

Here are the findings:

- 1) There was some variation between countries, but a total of 31% of men interviewed said they had been violent against their partner.
- 2) The strongest risk factor was witnessing parental violence. This led men to accept violence against their partners as normal, so that violent patterns of behavior were passed down the generations.
- 3) Where gender inequality is accepted as the norm in society, the rates of intimate partner violence were higher. These attitudes are also passed down the generations.
- 4) Where men are expected to be aggressive and dominant in order to be seen as masculine, the rates of intimate partner violence were higher.
- 5) Gender based violence affects women’s participation in society, tending to lead to gender inequality.”

Now I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module – the survey results are reprinted there for your reference – and answer the following question: “What are the factors that make it more likely for men to beat their wives?” When you have completed your answer, click the continue button.

Here are some answers others have come up with in the past for the question: “What are the factors that make it more likely for men to beat their wives? ”

- Children who saw their fathers hit their mothers are more likely to repeat that behavior

- When culture thinks its okay for men to hit women, it happens more often
- When men think they are supposed to be aggressive and dominant, because the culture tells that that is normal, they are more likely to prove they are normal by being violent to women partners.
- Women who have been hit and abused are less likely to contribute to their communities.

Now, let's explore a little more deeply how this impacts young people. What do you think? How might all of this impact young people growing up?

Well, others have said it impacts:

- Boys trying to be more than they possibly can be. Feeling like failures if they are not "muscle-bound", athletic or "man enough"!
- Girls trying to be sexy, attractive to men and hating their bodies because they don't look like the women in the movies or magazines.
- And finally, the impact can sometimes lead to much more serious behaviors in both genders like suicide or sexual confusion of some sort when they don't "measure up".

What about some specific examples that you can hear about in news reports? What about ISIS and the violence of men there, and the role of women who have to be completely covered up in that extreme Muslim culture?

Can you think of other examples from your own culture of how these stereotypes and feeling vulnerable might affects us?

Some people have said:

- Failure to educate women because they don't "need" it, are not capable, etc.
- Female infanticide in some cultures
- Forcing boys to become child soldiers
- Rites of passage that teach boys they have to be tough, mean, "kill the lion barehanded", etc.
- Trafficking of women (and sometimes boys)

All of these examples reflect how deep the impact of sin is in our world and how far we have fallen from what God intended, and what he called "very good" in the last module.

Remember that, "Very good" was defined as "The shared call to relationship to God and each other, and shared dominion over this world."

It is Impossible to fulfill the highest calling in our lives whilst either gender feels trapped by their stereotype or marginalized by the cultural traditions in which they live. To reflect the full image of God we need leaders who will co-reign to bring the Kingdom of God to a desperate world, employing the fullest range of their unique natural gifts and talents.

Unit 5 – Shared Need for a Redeemer

Thankfully God never leaves us without hope! Let's look at Genesis 3:15.

And I will put enmity

between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,

and you will strike his heel."

Whom is God referring to here when he says, "He will crush your head and you shall strike his heel?"

Well, even in the midst of relaying the consequences of sin, God foreshadows His plan for redemption in Genesis 3:15 - and also in Romans 16:20. This is the first foreshadowing of Jesus' birth through the seed of a woman. In other words, God is going to use the woman as a tool through which His redemption will come, because He is a just and loving God.

Now, all of us realize that Jesus is our Redeemer, but let's think about this word a little deeper.

What does the word "REDEEMER" imply? What does the term "redeem" mean?

Well, one possible answer is that "Redeem" means to bring things right back to where they should be; to reverse the effects of sin on the world.

A “Redeemer” saves man from sin and the world from the effects of sin. A Redeemer is sent to bring the world to look more like the Kingdom of God and what it was created to be, to bring restoration.

Now I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module and answer the following questions:

So, what does Jesus coming as the Redeemer imply for men and women? What would it mean to be redeemed for each of them? State as many specifics as you can.

When you have completed your answers, click the continue button.

So, here are some answers others have provided to the questions: So what does Jesus coming as the Redeemer imply for men and women? And what would it mean to be redeemed for each of them?

- That men and women are restored to right relationship with God
- That women and men are restored to “co-rulers” with God, both playing complementary roles in mutual submission
- And that men don’t have to be mean and violent to prove they are men, and women don’t have to be sex objects to prove they are women.

Unit 6 – Jesus’ Example—Radical Redemption!

Let’s look at Jesus example while here on earth and see if how he lived reflects radical redemption for both men and women.

Let’s read John 8:2-11 and then I’ll have some questions for you.

John 8:2-11

2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. **3** The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group **4** and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. **5** In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” **6** They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. **7** When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." **8** Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. **10** Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

11 "No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

So now I have three questions for you. Why is it the story of the adulterous "woman"? How can only one person be adulterous, especially when "caught in the act"? And how do Jesus' actions in this situation reflect "redemption"?

Well, others in the past have said:

- The Jews' cultural double standard made them blind to injustice. It didn't even occur to them that the man caught with her "in the act" of adultery would be equally guilty. This is a clear example of "worldview" at work.
- Jesus' response to this woman is Grace, not justice—very radical and redemptive.

Now let's look at another example. Here is Mark 10:2-12 where Jesus is teaching on marriage and divorce.

Mark 10:2-12

2 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied.

4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.

6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' **7** 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, **8** and the two will become one flesh.' [c] So they are no longer two, but one flesh. **9** Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. **11** He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. **12** And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

So, why do you think – and focus on verse 12 especially – is this an example of radical redemption?

Well, this is because Jesus assumes equality between men and women here. In that day, women could not divorce their husbands. That was impossible, only men could divorce their wives. For Jesus to talk about the possibility of a woman divorcing her husband was incredibly radical.

Now let's look at one more example from Luke 13:10-17.

Luke 13:10-17

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, **11** and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. **12** When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." **13** Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

14 Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

15 The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? **16** Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

17 When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

Now, what do you think makes this story one of radical redemption?

In the past others have said:

- Healing itself is radical redemption
- Jesus invitation to come forward broke the culture of male /female separation, because she had to come into the men's section of the synagogue in order to respond to Jesus invitation.
- In verse 16 – with a statement that is most radical, Jesus calls her a "daughter of Abraham". This is a completely new term, which had never been used before. And

it turned the culture upside down. Now, both men and women can be considered sons and daughters of Abraham.

Now, let's talk for a moment about an enormous symbolic change that happened through Jesus. Prior to the coming of Jesus what was the only physical symbol required for the children of Israel to show that they were included in God's people? Circumcision, right? But after Jesus, the main physical symbol that we use for joining the Body of Christ is Baptism.

How does the change from circumcision to baptism reflect the radical redemption of Jesus for men and women?

In the past others have said:

- That circumcision in the Jewish culture was a uniquely male sacrament, but Baptism is gender inclusive, meant to be used equally for all men and women.
- Baptism is the public physical sign of inclusion in the people of God and it is gender inclusive.

Isn't this just so interesting, that even the physical sacrament changed with the coming of Jesus.

Unit 7 – Servant rather than Conquering King

Let's start off this unit by looking at Luke 22:47-53.

Luke 22:47-53

47 While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, 48 but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

49 When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" 50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

51 But Jesus answered, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and

clubs? 53 Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”

What did everyone expect of Jesus, if he was really the Messiah? This was true of even his closest disciples - as seen in verses 49-50

Well, they expected:

- That he would come to power by force and violence
- That he would lead a rebellion and overthrow the Roman oppressors.
- And that he expected his followers to take up arms.

But in contrast, how did Jesus come?

- He came as a servant,
- He came to lay down his life which actually broke the power of sin and evil - rather than through war and violence
- He came to enable his followers
- He came loving the sinners
- And he came to wash the feet of those working for him

This totally overturns the image that a “real man” is one who dominates and wins by power, violence, fear and might, because that is not God’s design, but just the result of sin and the fall. This is probably the most radical example of the redemption that has come through Jesus.

Unit 8 – Jesus Taught both Men and Women - and sent them out to serve in ministry and leadership

One of the most radical and redemptive practices of Jesus is the fact that he taught the deep truths of the Kingdom to both men and women, and released them into ministry. One of the ways he did this was by not restricting his teaching to just the temple or synagogue. But rather he taught on the hillsides, in homes, anywhere people were, rather than confining his teaching to places, as would have been the normal practice at the time, where only the significant male religious leaders could access him.

Now, turn to your workbooks for this module and I want you to think about stories from the gospel where Jesus taught serious theological truths to one or more women. In several of these, he then sent them out into ministry. See how many of these stories you

can think of and list them in your workbook. When you have finished, click the continue button.

[WM_04_08_S2](#)

Here is what others have come up with as their lists in the past:

- The Samaritan woman who then becomes an evangelist in her village in John 4:4-42.
- Mary sitting at Jesus feet as a learner in Luke 10:38-42
- Martha when she came out to meet Him at Lazarus' death in John 11:20-26
- Women were a regular and constant part of Jesus ministerial entourage. "The women," like the apostles, spent regular time with Jesus as seen in Luke 8:1-3
- Jesus entrusted the first proclamation of His resurrection to a woman—Mary Magdalene in John 20:17.
- And in Matthew 28:10 on Easter morning the women were instructed to go proclaim the resurrection. This shows that there is little point in asking the question whether women should preach when Jesus sent them out to preach to the apostles the reality of the resurrection.

The most striking thing about the role of women in the life and teaching of Jesus is the simple fact that they are there! They were valued by Jesus and were thought equal to the men and worthy of conversation and integration. Just like Jesus was continually teaching his disciples, he also consistently taught women. **He taught them** the gospel which was radically different from the Jewish approach, which thought teaching women the law improper and even obscene.

Unit 9 – Obedience the Standard for Both Women and Men

The radical redemption Jesus brought impacted everyone that came in contact with him, male, female, rich, poor, sick, needy. They all were radically impacted and their worldview was changed.

Let's read one final passage for this module that in some ways sums up all we've said about the changes Jesus brought.

Let's read Luke 11:27-28 and then I'll have a question for you.

Luke 11:27-28

27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

What is the issue Jesus was trying to get to when He gave His response in this story?

Well, a woman called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." In Jesus' response, He rejects this destiny-restricting world view. "He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it'". Personal obedience to the word of God is the basis of blessedness—therefore the issue is not, "Are you male or female?" The issue is, "have you been faithful to the call of God upon your life?" The Jewish culture would say that a woman's only value came from having a male child. But Jesus said no—value is based on obedience. This is equally true for both men and for women. For all who obey His word, there is no God-given limit on the God-given destiny.

In this module we have discussed the tragic outcome of The Fall and Sin on our lives and our world. But Jesus came to redeem all of that. Jesus lived out His life as a radical reflection of the values of the Kingdom of God rather than bowing to the cultural norms of the day. He modeled what we, as Christians, are to do with our lives. His death, the ultimate sacrifice, was the redemption of all of mankind from sin, including the results of the sin of Adam and Eve. His death restored our right relationship with God, took away the effects of sin on the world and gave us the chance to be a part of restoring the Kingdom of God on this earth.

This is what the Church is called to, to be a mirror image of the Kingdom of God so that people will be attracted to Jesus and find redemption from their sins. In order for the Church to do this as completely and accurately as possible we must be radical; we must look different than the sinful cultures we find ourselves in.

As we conclude this module, I have one final exercise for you. Turn in your workbooks to this module and answer the following questions. Take your time and be reflective.

First question: Think about your own worldview or mindset of what you are supposed to be as a man or woman. Does it come closer to Jesus model, or to the "James Bond movie" model that we discussed in this session. What aspects of your worldview do you know need to change and what steps can you take to make those changes?

Second question: Think about the places where you work and worship, your organization, business and your church. Are there any common practices reflecting an attitude that women are not as valuable as, or capable as, or equal to men? List any common practices that come to mind for each that may not be Biblical reflections of the Kingdom of God as Jesus modeled it by His interactions with women. Now, pray about whether or not you should consider bringing change in any of these practices if it is in your power to do so.

And the third and final question: Read back through the story of Rebecca in this unit and consider her questions in light of the redemption Jesus brought. Should the Church be involved in alleviating the suffering faced by many women in the world today? Why or why not? Is there anything that you and/or your church can do to be involved immediately?

Module 5

The Principals of Interpretation

Unit 1 – Introduction to the Principals of Interpretation

Up to this point in this course, we've talked a lot about Genesis and what God intended. Then what went wrong, and how Jesus has redeemed that. Now, we are going to take a look at how to interpret some key passages in the New Testament so that we can understand better what Paul was trying to tell us about women and men in leadership, and about marriage.

The passages we are going to explore are all in the letters of Paul and are sometimes referred to as the "difficult passages". They are considered "difficult" because it is necessary to understand both the historical and cultural context as well as Greek grammar in order to properly understand and apply them.

This module will:

- Highlight that the very need for interpretation is in the nature of Scripture itself.
- Will explore some of the rules that are needed to insure proper understanding and application of the Scriptures.
- And will also demonstrate how to use those rules, then challenge you to do the same as you read the bible.

In our next unit we will return to Rebecca's story

Unit 2 – Case Study: Rebecca Finds a Mentor

Rebecca's world seemed to be caving in. It had been several months since the elders meeting, but she could not get the scene out of her mind. The humiliation, the shame, embarrassment and anger still ran strong within. What they had said basically was that she was a second-class person. Because of gender alone her disqualification from leadership was sealed. Scripture had been quoted, heads had nodded in agreement and she was out. It seemed so unjust and short sighted. She processed her confusion with God and asked him to help her understand if the Scriptures quoted to her were really to be applied to her in this way.

It was several weeks later, Rebecca had gotten busy with her practice, calls at the hospital, and she had once again buried her feelings under a load of work. At her office she was looking over her patient list and noticed that Elisabeth Aziz was scheduled for that afternoon. She knew Elisabeth from church; she was one of those ladies who wore a

sense of peace and graciousness. Her husband was a professor at the university and taught at the local seminary, but other than that she really did not know them well.

Rebecca was surprised as she walked into the consulting room to see both Elisabeth and Dr. Aziz sitting in the chairs waiting. After brief greetings she got down to business. Elisabeth had not been feeling well for some time, Dr. Aziz seemed more worried than Elisabeth. He seemed to be a very caring and gentle man. Rebecca caught herself smiling. Dr. Aziz was the classic absent-minded professor. His bushy eyebrows would have seemed menacing were it not for his warm, peaceful eyes and gentle brow.

After several trips and a rather long set of testing, the Aziz's started to become friends. Rebecca felt relieved when the tests came back for Elisabeth. There was no life-threatening condition and with some medication Elisabeth should be back to full strength soon.

She decided to stop by the Aziz's apartment on her way home to tell Elisabeth the good news. Their place was on her way home. Besides over the weeks they had spent together she found she rather liked the gentle Elisabeth and the eccentric doctor.

She rang the bell and Dr. Aziz opened the door. Immediately his eyes showed fear and concern to see Rebecca at the door. He expected the worst. Elisabeth came down the hall soon after and invited Rebecca into the parlor. As they sat Dr. Aziz couldn't wait to ask, "Was the news bad?"

"No", Rebecca answered. She then explained the results and told Elisabeth that with proper medication she should be fine. Everyone was so relieved. Elisabeth insisted on making tea for everyone and left the room, Rebecca thought about protesting but in the end said nothing.

Rebecca suddenly found herself sitting with Dr. Aziz alone. Dr. Aziz was standing at the window, hands clasped behind his back, looking out the window. Without turning around he spoke to Rebecca. "You are carrying a very heavy burden my dear, I can see the pain in your eyes and feel your despair. I certainly do not want to intrude in your private life but Elisabeth and I would count it an honor to talk and pray with you and help however we can. Would you like to talk about what is troubling your soul?" His voice was so gentle and kind, that whatever fears Rebecca had dissolved. She began haltingly telling of her confusion and her hurts from the elder board, questions about a women's role and the scripture, the feelings of being wounded and sadness in her spirit. At some point Elisabeth returned with the tea, sat it on the table and quietly sat next to Rebecca and gently put her hand on her arm."

“Rebecca, my child, I am so profoundly sorry for the things you have gone through.” He went on quickly, “Rebecca if you are willing to be a diligent student, I would be proud to work with you in discovering some very wonderful truths about God and his word.

“Rebecca are you interested in making the journey of your life, a journey that in some ways will never end?”

Rebecca agreed to Dr. Aziz’s offer. The next week she was early for her meeting with Dr. Aziz. She came with questions fueled during the week by her reading and re-reading the portions of scripture regarding the role of women. Some of the passages she read were not all that clear as to exactly what they meant. And she wanted to know, how we interpret Gods word for today. Is there only one way to interpret certain passages? Her mind was racing ahead. She read the passages in Corinthians and First Timothy in several versions and they still were pretty clear. A woman was to be silent in church how are these to be interpreted?

As soon as she seated herself she did not wait for Dr. Aziz to begin, but blurted out, “ Dr. Aziz there is no hope I have read these passages over and over and they seem so clear, Paul forbids women from speaking in church or to have any leadership as far as I can tell. Maybe we should just forget the whole idea, all the translations are the same or very similar. I don’t think there is much hope.”

Dr. Aziz smiled at the opportunity her apparent dead end presented to him. He began, “some things are not always what they seem at first glance, Rebecca. To gain understanding it is necessary to follow the appropriate steps of interpretation and application referred to as exegesis and hermeneutics.”

Unit 3 – Definitions of Exegesis and Hermeneutics

So, at the end of the previous unit, what are your first thoughts about Dr. Aziz’s final statement there “some things are not always what they seem at first glance, Rebecca. To gain understanding it is necessary to follow the appropriate steps of interpretation and application...”

Well, others in the past have said:

- That it makes them nervous to imply that scripture is not simply what it says.
- That the word “Interpretation” implies adding something to the words on the page, or that we can’t understand what the Bible is saying to us.
- That it will be interesting to learn some more about how to understand the Bible.

Does anyone know the meaning of those two terms that Dr. Aziz just mentioned, “exegesis” and “hermeneutics”?

Well, exegesis means understanding what the passage meant to those who were writing it and those initially reading it. And hermeneutics means, thinking about what it might mean for today, and for all time.

Don’t worry yet about understanding these terms, we’ll take a closer look at them later in this module and learn together about their meaning and importance.

Unit 4 – General Principles of Interpretation and Application

As Christians we believe the Bible is:

Number 1 - Inspired by the Holy Spirit,

Number 2 – Authoritative and

Number 3 - Provides us with all we need to know for life and Godliness.

We believe it is our duty and responsibility to consistently search the Scriptures for ourselves and make life applications. We are grateful that so much of the Bible can be clearly understood and applied. However, as we’ve already seen - as you will recall from module 1 - Christians do come to different conclusions about the meaning of some Bible passages.

What is there about scripture that results in Bible believing Christians disagreeing about the meaning of some Bible passages?

Well, others in the past have said:

- The Bible is written in a number of different styles by a number of different people and at different times.
- Because the Bible was written by people, to other people, it has a context and certain cultural assumptions that are not always easily understood thousands of years later.
- And that it was written in different languages, so even the translation that enables us to read it, is a type of interpretation.

Now, let's read a quote about this by Dr. Gordon Fee, co-author of a wonderful book on understanding the Bible called, "How to Read the Bible for all its Worth."

"The need to interpret lies in the nature of Scripture itself. Historically, the church has understood the nature of Scripture much the same as it has understood the person of Christ – in other words, understanding that the Bible is at the same time both human and divine. As Professor George Ladd once put it, "the Bible is the Word of God given in the words of people in history." In fact, not only is the Bible God's word written by people to people in general, it was written to specific people addressing them in their situation. It is this dual nature of the Bible that demands of us the task of interpretation."

From reading this quote what did you find as new, or as already understood?

Well, others have said:

- That the Bible is God's Word
- The Bible has eternal relevance, and speaks to all humankind in every age and culture
- That because it is God's work we must listen and obey
- And because God chose to speak his Word through human words in history, every book in the Bible also has historical particularity; each document is conditioned by the language, time, and culture in which it was originally written
- And that interpretation of the Bible is demanded by the "tension" that exists between its eternal relevance and its historical particularity

Now in our next unit let's learn more about good interpretation principles.

Unit 5 – Interpretation (exegesis)

Sometimes people fear the process of interpretation because it implies people can make the Scripture mean whatever they want it to mean and most of us have experienced examples of that! However, sound interpretation and application is governed by a set of rules which, when used properly, keep the interpreter from reading their own meaning into the text.

Now, let's look at two passages from scripture and then answer a couple of questions.

Philippians 2:14-15

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing,

15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky

2 Timothy 4:11-13

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. 12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

So, the two questions are:

Firstly, which of these passages is clearly applicable for us today and which is not?

And secondly, how did you decide your answer for question 1 and what "rules of interpretation" can you identify from how you made that decision?

Well, it's pretty clear that we can apply Philippians 2:14-15 for ourselves today, because just like in Paul's day we need to do everything without complaining or arguing!

But we definitely cannot apply 2 Timothy 4:11-13, because we can't bring Mark to Paul, or pick up his cloak and scrolls!

A couple of "rules of interpretation" that we can get from this exercise are

Number 1 – Understand what the author intended to say to the person or group to whom he was writing.

And number 2 – Only then can we consider whether or not this applies to us today and how.

In order to understand what the original author intended to say to his audience you will need to take five factors into consideration. We will look at these factors in more detail next.

Unit 6 – Historical / Cultural Context

Sometimes people fear the process of interpretation because it implies people can make the Scripture mean whatever they want it to mean. Most of us have experienced examples of that! However, sound interpretation and application is governed by a set of rules which, when used properly, keep the interpreter from reading their own meaning into the text.

Now, let's look at two passages from scripture and then answer a couple of questions.

Philippians 2:14-15

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing,

15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky

2 Timothy 4:11-13

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. **12** I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. **13** When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

So the two questions are:

Firstly, which of these passages is clearly applicable for us today and which is not?

And secondly, how did you decide your answer for this first question and what "rules of interpretation" can you identify from how you made that decision?

Well, it's pretty clear that we can apply Philippians 2:14-15 for ourselves today, because just like in Paul's day we need to do everything without complaining or arguing!

But, we definitely cannot apply 2 Timothy 4:11-13, because we can't bring Mark to Paul, or pick up his cloak and scrolls!

A couple of "rules of interpretation" that we can get from this exercise are

Rule number 1 – We need to understand what the author intended to say to the person or group to whom he was writing.

And rule number 2 – Only when we understand what the original author was intending to say to the person or group to whom he was writing, can we consider whether or not this applies to us today and how it applies to us.

In order to understand what the original author intended to say to his audience we need to take several things into consideration. We will look at these factors in more detail next.

Unit 7 – Rules of Interpretation

First up is historical and or cultural context. Consider the way Paul often asks at the end of his letters “greet the saints with a holy kiss”. Does this mean we should all as Christians greet each other with a “holy kiss?” It is what Paul said, but why? If we know something about the culture of Paul’s time, we know that in that setting a “holy kiss” was a culturally acceptable way to greet someone warmly and with affection.

What greeting is typical for close friends in your culture who want to express their care for one another? Well, it could be hugging, shaking hands or a kiss on the cheek. Application is now simple. Paul is saying, greet one another in a way that expresses warmth and affection, whatever that is.

Often to understand the historical and cultural context of one of Paul’s letters, we need help. That kind of help can come from a commentary, Bible dictionary, or a study Bible. Lots of these are now available for free, on-line!

Next is literary context. The Bible was written in a number of different writing styles or genres. There are stories (narratives) poetry, wisdom literature, prophecy, letters, etc. Which one you are reading impacts how you should interpret it.

Let’s read Matthew 5:30.

“And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away...”

Do most Christians believe we should take this literally?

No, we don’t. This is considered “hyperbole” or an exaggerated statement to make the point that it is impossible for us to deal with sin by simply removing those parts that

cause sin. Sin is a matter of the heart. If we took this literally, then most of us would be walking around without body parts! It's important to interpret scripture wisely!

There are "rules for interpretation" for every literary style. In this course we cannot cover them all, but if you are interested there are excellent books on the subject.

The "difficult passages" are all in the same literary form, which is letters. Paul wrote epistles or letters. This is personal correspondence from him to a church. Every letter was written in response to specific circumstances the church was in or questions the church had. Paul had a previous history with most of those he wrote to. He wrote his letters keeping that in mind.

Do you know what the context was when Paul wrote 1 Timothy?

Well:

- Paul had just left Ephesus
- He had just been involved in identifying and throwing out influential false teachers.
- And he left Timothy in charge

Knowing these facts influences how we understand what Paul is saying in 1 Timothy. Because Paul's letters are personal correspondence, we are aware of only part of the picture. In many ways reading them is like listening to one end of a telephone conversation. If you are in the room listening to a friend carry on a conversation on the telephone, you can only hear what the friend is saying, not what the other person is saying. You must guess what the other person's questions or statements are by the tone of voice and what is being said in response.

As we address these key passages about women, we must seek to understand what is going on in the church to which Paul is writing. What are the issues? What is his point? What does Paul want them to understand and apply? We must work to hear Paul's words first from their perspective. Once we understand that, then we can identify the point or general principle of the passage so that we can apply it today in our situation.

Another rule is that you must consider the grammatical context, to understand the meaning of a phrase or verse. That is, we need to understand the verses in the context of the sentence, paragraph, chapter and book that it is in.

Two more rules that guide interpretation include the rule that the understanding of a scripture will not contradict what scripture says elsewhere. For example, Paul says in Galatians 3:28 "For there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." He says in that passage in a number of ways that one category is not superior to the other. Therefore, we know that this is what he believes about male and female and their salvation in Christ and their value in the Body.

Another rule is that a writer will not contradict what he actually does. For example, Paul could not mean that all women should be silent at all times in the church and at the same time instruct women what to wear when they pray or give a prophecy. Or Paul would not say women cannot teach a man, anywhere at any time and then commend a woman for teaching a man as he does with his friends Priscilla and Aquila when they took Apollos aside and "explained to him the way of God more adequately." in Acts 18:26.

In 1 Corinthians we find Paul referring to Chloe as a leader of a church meeting in her home. And we find him commending Phoebe in Romans 16:1 as a minister and calling Junia an Apostle in Romans 16:7. And in another letter referring to Euodia, Syntyche, Mary, Persis, Tryphena and Tryphos as co-workers. So, in summary, Paul cannot have said in one place women must never teach a man and then commended women for their leading and teaching in the church in another.

So, here is a summary of the rules of interpretation:

So, firstly we need to understand what the author intended to say to the person or group to whom he was writing. (Exegesis)

This follows these specific rules - You need to take into account the:

- a. Historical and or Cultural Context
- b. The Literary Context
- c. The Grammatical Context
- d. That it cannot contradict what Scripture says elsewhere
- e. And that it cannot contradict what author did elsewhere

Only after we have completed all these steps to understand what the author was trying to say to the person or group to whom he was writing, can we then move to the step of whether or not it applies to us and how to apply it to ourselves.

Secondly, then when we've understood what the original author was trying to say, can we consider whether or not this applies to us today and how. (Hermeneutics)

In the next unit we are going to watch a video clip by a Biblical scholar and author named N.T. Wright who summarizes some of these thoughts when asked about women taking leadership in the church.

Unit 8 – Interpreting 1Timothy 2:11-15

Now let's try some interpretation together by looking at one of the "difficult passages" written by Paul to Timothy about things going on in the church in Ephesus. We are going to go through the exercise of careful intentional Scriptural interpretation practicing the "rules of Interpretation" we looked at in the previous unit.

First, we will read 1Timothy 2. Pay special attention to verses 11 through 15. Then I'll have some questions for you.

1 Timothy 2

1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. 7 And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

8 Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. 9 I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

OK, given what we've just talked about regarding interpretation, and the rules we have, what questions come to mind as you read what Paul says here? Write down as many questions as you can think of, and then make note of the main 4 or 5. Turn to your

workbooks for this module, review the passage there, and do this exercise now. Click the continue button when you are done.

Here are some of the questions and observations others have come up with in the past:

- Who is Paul writing to? What is happening there? Why is he writing? What is the context of 1 Tim 2:11-15?
- Paul says he wants a woman to learn. What is the content and context of that learning to be?
- Paul identifies a specific attitude in how he wants this woman to learn in verse 11 “in full submission”. Is it possible he is addressing a specific attitude of someone that needs correcting in the similar way he corrected the attitude of men in verse 8 where he says I want men to pray without anger or disputing?
- Paul sounds like he is making a decision about something specific when he says, “I am not permitting a woman...” in verse 12. It’s as if he has been mulling over his options and now has come to a conclusion.
- Paul gets very specific in verse 11 and says a woman (singular). This particularly stands out because a few verses earlier he addresses women in general regarding dress and a few verses latter he speaks of women being saved. So it is odd he uses the singular form in verse 11, unless of course he has one specific woman in mind.
- The Greek word for “have authority over” is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used. There are other Greek words commonly used to denote the authority of a leader. If Paul wanted to say I do not permit a woman to lead a man he would have said that. The word he chose to use says something like “I do not want a woman to usurp the authority of a man....” again it sounds like Paul is speaking to a specific situation in which he is reinforcing the authority of a leader. Possibly Timothy?
- Why does Paul refer to the Genesis passage? Is he rooting his decision in a principle from Genesis that is binding for all women at all time or is there another reason?
- What does “childbearing” have to do with a women’s salvation?

Always be sure and continue to ask questions of the text, even as you start to answer some. Remember the “rules of interpretation” that until you have some clarity about what the author meant to the group or the person he was writing to, you cannot begin to ask how it applies to us today. It cannot mean something today that it never meant in the first place.

Now, let’s see what we can understand about the historical context of 1Timothy by reading through the entire book. As you read through 1Timothy keep these questions in mind: Why does Paul write this letter? What is the main problem Paul is addressing? What do you think the answers could be to these two questions based on your reading? Note the verse that gives you a clue to each answer in your workbooks and click continue when you are done.

Here are some answers to these questions that others have come up with in the past:

- Paul writes this letter because there is heresy
- He wants to deal with the problem of false teachers in Ephesus
- He wants to refute false teachers
- He is asking Timothy to supervise the affairs of a growing church
- And out of concern for Timothy.

We now need to look one other place in scripture where we can find out more about the city of Ephesus and the historical context of this letter. Read Acts 19:1, 13-20, 23-41. Note all the things you can about the city of Ephesus, it’s spiritual climate, and the context there.

Acts 19:1

19 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples

Acts 19:13-20

13 Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, “In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” 14 Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I

know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" 16 Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

17 When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. 18 Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. 19 A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. 20 In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

Acts 19:23-41

23 About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. 24 A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. 25 He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: "You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. 26 And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. 27 There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

28 When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" 29 Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. 30 Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. 31 Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

32 The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. 33 The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. 34 But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

35 The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? 36 Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you

ought to calm down and not do anything rash. 37 You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. 38 If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. 39 If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. 40 As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." 41 After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.

So now I want you to note all the things you can about the city of Ephesus, its spiritual climate, and the context there. Make these notes in your workbooks and click continue when you have finished.

Here are some observations that others have made in the past about Ephesus:

- The economy of the city was based on the worship of Artemis, the fertility goddess and the temple to her.
- Ephesus was an amazingly immoral city with enormous spiritual warfare taking place, with demonic activity.
- That there was a huge amount of sorcery being practiced
- And that the people believed that the image of Artemis "fell from heaven"

As Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, the church at Ephesus was undergoing tremendous difficulties. The city continued to be dedicated to the worship of the Goddess Artemis. The Jews and pagan religious leaders continued persecuting the church. As if that weren't enough, false teachers within the church were promoting heresy. Timothy definitely had his hands full!

Next, let's look at the literary context. What kind of "literature" is 1 Timothy?

Well, it is a letter.

Continuing down the list of things to consider if we want to understand what the original author meant, we know this is a letter from Paul specifically to Timothy. So, we know that it has content that was intended uniquely for a certain person in a certain situation. What we don't know is exactly what Timothy said to Paul, that Paul might be answering.

But what we do know is that heresy was a huge problem in the church and the main subject of the letter.

We're now going to look at 1 Timothy 2: 8-9 for another example of Paul addressing specific cultural issues in this letter.

Let's read 1 Timothy 2:8-9 and then I'll have a question.

1 Timothy 2:8-9

8 Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. 9 I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes

So, what do you think Paul was trying to get across to the men and women in Ephesus through these verses? Go back to your workbooks for this module and when you have completed your answer, click continue.

Here is what some others have said in the past:

- If you don't know the context you may wonder if Paul is asking men to pray in a certain way, with hands lifted. But actually, during this time, men usually raised their hands to pray. Paul is not trying to get them to change that. Rather, there must have been a problem with anger and disputing among the men, and Paul wants them to pray more. We can guess that from the phrases Paul uses.
- Because we know that Ephesus is such an immoral city, we can guess that the women need encouragement to not dress like everyone in the city. Paul's not trying to tell them exactly how to dress, but rather helping them to be more concerned with eternal things than the next new dress or piece of jewelry.

Next let's look at grammatical context. Something we may have noticed in our questions is that there is a startling grammatical clue for us in 1 Timothy 2. There is an unusual switch from plural to singular and back to plural in verses 9 through 15.

Verses 9 10 uses "women" - plural

Verses 11 15a uses "a woman" - singular

And verse 15b uses "women" - plural

Many Bible scholars suggest that the reason for this switch is that Paul had a particular woman in mind, one who along with Alexander and Hymenaeus who are mentioned in 1Tim 1:19 and 20 has been teaching heresy, and therefore must be silenced. However, kindly, he doesn't mention her name, but instead urges that she be taught the truth and that she learns in quietness and full submission. Therefore, Paul was only prohibiting women, who were not properly instructed, from teaching.

If we re-look at verses 2:13-14 the reference to Adam and Eve can support this understanding. As we saw in Genesis 2 Adam was the one who had received teaching about not eating the fruit, and just like the men in Ephesus, would have received more training. But Eve was more easily deceived because she only had minimal training, which was similar to the woman in Ephesus. Eve's deception illustrates the deception of untrained and aggressive Ephesian women involved in false teaching. The antidote Paul offers is better training for the woman, who can then teach, if she learns in full humility. Remember from chapter 1 that this is the main point of this book—good teaching and full understanding, and the importance of the truth.

Next let's look at the rule that says, "Scripture cannot contradict what Scripture says elsewhere". Click continue when you are ready to proceed.

The next of our interpretation rules states that: "Scripture cannot contradict what Scripture says elsewhere."

Some try to teach that Paul brings up the story of Adam and Eve here to make it clear that he is saying that women should never teach men or have authority over them and this is a truth that is universal for all time.

What problems can you think of for this interpretation, when we think about the rule that says: "Scripture cannot contradict what Scripture says elsewhere?"

For this next exercise, I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module and think about the places that we have studied in scripture that support the idea that women who have had good teaching and who have good skills can teach men as well as women. And as we have already established as a rule - If scripture cannot contradict what scripture

says elsewhere, what do we need to conclude about the idea that each of these passages can be interpreted to mean that no women can ever teach a man? Come up with your answers and note them in your workbooks. Click continue when you are done.

In the past others have said that:

- The understanding that women can never teach men, does not fit with Genesis 1 that we've already studied.
- It does not fit well with Jesus' example of sending the Samaritan woman to evangelize her village, or sending Mary Magdalene to announce to the disciples that he has risen,
- And it does not fit well with Paul addressing lots of women leaders in Romans 16.

Our last rule of interpretation is that a passage cannot contradict what the author said elsewhere. The understanding that it is an individual woman being addressed in 1Timothy chapter 2, also fits much better with the fact that Ephesus is the church where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila to teach and disciple believers – which is shown in Acts 18. How could Paul leave a woman in a teaching position for this church, then turn around and ban all women from teaching there or anywhere for all time?

Then we come to this interesting verse in 1Timothy 2:15 that scholars all puzzle over.

1 Timothy 2:15

15 But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Ok, now using your skills as a Bible interpreter – from the rules we have been learning - what might Paul have been trying to say here? Come up with 2 or 3 and write them down in your workbook for this module. When you are done, click continue.

Well, three possible meanings are cited in the NIV study bible and elsewhere:

1. The verse refers to women being saved spiritually through the most significant birth of all: the incarnation of Christ
2. It refers to women being kept physically safe in childbirth.

3. It speaks of the Godly woman finding fulfillment in her role as a wife and mother in the home.

Which one of these possible understandings do you think fits the best with the rest of scripture?

Well, most scholars agree that only #1 makes any sense theologically with the rest of the Bible. The concept that women find spiritual salvation through childbirth is impossible and goes against all other teaching of the New Testament on salvation. Most commentators just confirm that this is one of those passages that we just don't know enough about to be certain of. What we can be certain about though, is what it does not mean.

While a case can be - and has been - made for a variety of interpretations from this passage as to what Paul might have been saying to Timothy, it would be tragic to understand it as silencing all women for all time from teaching publicly to men. Why? Because to find that meaning would be to apply it today with that meaning, and as a result, many great teachers who God has equipped to serve His Body would be silenced.

Even though the authors and facilitators of this course material deeply believe that the interpretation that we have discussed today is the best one, we must always remember that we need to extend grace and respect to others who disagree. Humility and Unity are more important than "getting it right." Love demands that we make room for others who have different understandings of a passage. As we have seen, scholars disagree over the meaning of some passages, and frankly there is more than one way to interpret some of these "difficult passages".

Unit 9 – Summary and Final Application

In summary, remember as Christians we believe the Bible is:

- (1) Inspired by the Holy Spirit,
- (2) Authoritative and
- (3) Provides us with all we need to know for life and Godliness.

We believe it is our duty and responsibility to consistently search the Scriptures for ourselves and make life applications. Not only is the Bible God's word written by people to people in general, it was written to specific people addressing them in their situation.

It is this dual nature of the Bible that demands of us the task of interpretation. Let's do that task well so that we can keep growing in our understanding of God and his ways and obey him.

Now as a final application I want you to think again about what you have learned about interpreting scripture. Turn to your workbooks for this module and:

1. Write down the rules of interpretation that we have been practicing from memory and see how many you can remember. Then go back and look at prior pages in the workbook where we listed them and correct your list.
2. Read back through 1 Timothy 2: 11-15. What have you learned today that has changed your understanding of the meaning of these verses, or at least made you begin to question whether what you've been taught in the past, that these verses said, is really true?

Module 6

Women and Men in Marriage

Unit 1 – Introduction to Examining Biblical and Cultural models of Marriage

The purpose of this module, which is all about marriage, is to help you think about God’s intention for those who marry, to live in unity with Him and with one another. Our intention is to provide some refreshment, and perhaps some opportunities for both women and men to reset the way we think about marriage, so that together we will begin to ‘taste and see’ the full extent of God’s intention for these relationships and become a model for our families and generations to come.

This module is intended to be relevant and helpful to both men and women regardless of marital status.

We know that the participants in this course will have a wide range of both years and experience in marriage relationships. And we know that you will be bringing a variety of cultural norms surrounding marriage from your varied perspectives.

What we will be doing in this module is to continue developing some of the Biblical themes already discussed, which relate specifically to marriage.

This is one more area where even as Christians, we can look more like the culture around us, than we do like the Kingdom of God. Do you agree? And yet, this is the place where we see men and women working together most closely—or at least we should see that!

We will be drawing out some enduring God-honouring principles and look at the ways these can be played out within our marriage relationships and family life. We will explore God’s plan for unity and discuss some examples of where cultural norms clash with this.

Unit 2 – Origins of Marriage: God’s original plan (Genesis 1)

We are going to begin this unit with some thinking about your own culture. Go to your workbooks for this module and write a list to answer this question:

What are the different reasons people have for getting married in your culture? Another way to say this is, what are the “motives” for marriage in your culture that you have seen or experienced?

When you have finished your list, click the continue button.

Here are some of the reasons for getting married that others have listed in the past:

- An emotional reason – they are in love.
- A religious reason – they have a desire to pass on deeply held beliefs and practices through generations.
- A social reason - they have a desire to have children.
- Another social reason could be that the marriage was arranged by parents or an older family member committed to maintaining values and or status through generations. This is fairly common in India and other parts of South and East Asia as well as parts of Latin America. You see this happening quite often with royal families. There can also be arranged marriages for the purpose of gaining citizenship.
- Yet another social reason can be to seek prestigious relationships
- A financial reason - for financial security.
- There can be a physical reason - In societies where age, glamour, style and other aspects of physical image are highly valued, for example, Hollywood.

All of these can be reasons for marriage. Which would you say are most prevalent in your culture?

Now let's turn our attention to what scripture tells us about marriage.

Which Old Testament Biblical texts that you have already studied in this course, seem relevant to marriage?

Well, based on the best answers in the past, they would be:

- Genesis 1:28
- Genesis 2:18
- Genesis 2:24
- Genesis 3

Now let's look at the first three texts - we will come to Genesis 3 later, and then I'll have a question for you.

Genesis 1:28

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:18

18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Genesis 2:24

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

So now based on the scripture you are reading, what do you see are God's reasons for creating marriage? Turn to your workbooks for this module and when you have completed this exercise, click continue.

Well, others in the past, when answering the question, "What do you see are God's reasons for creating marriage?" Have come up with:

- Procreation (GEN 1:28), also mentioned PSALM 127:3-5.
- Companionship (GEN 2:18)
- Unity (GEN 2:24), also mentioned MAT 19:3-6.
- Love and Pleasure (ECC. 9:9)

If we think back to the list we made earlier in this unit of reasons why people get married in their specific culture, we see that those reasons are often quite different from God's desire for marriage. Not too surprisingly then, this causes us enormous problems - which we will look at as we continue through this module.

Unit 3 – God's original plan

Back in our study on Genesis 1 through 3, we focused on the equality God intended as he designed women and men to reflect his image together. We want to reflect this as married couples too. That is, being mutually supportive and living as one.

Remember in Genesis 2:18 we talked about the meaning of the word 'helper'? Do you recall what we discovered about that meaning?

- That the word 'Ezer' meaning 'helper' was never used to refer to an inferior person in the Old Testament.
- And that most often it means a companion or supporter and is referring to God, as in Psalm 121. See Hebrews 'one to help the helpless' – or as a savior, as described in Exodus 18:4.

Now let's read Genesis 2:18 and then I'll have three questions for you.

Genesis 2:18

18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

So, the questions are:

1. What other word do you see in this passage, which describes the word 'helper'?
2. How would you describe the word 'helper' as it is used in this passage? What picture does it paint?
3. How does this impact our concept of marriage relationships?

Go to your workbooks for this module and when you have completed your answers, click the continue button.

When asked these questions, here is what others have said in the past:

- The word 'suitable' is what God uses to describe the right kind of helper for the man. The Hebrew word for 'suitable' is 'Kenegdo' which means 'equal and corresponding to'. None of the animals were like Adam and would be a 'suitable' partner. God wanted Adam to have a 'soul mate' - someone made equally in intelligence, creativity. With a capacity to rule and live in relationship with him and fellow human beings - unlike any other creature he created.
- God had blessed them equally in his image and equally to serve together and take equal responsibility for being fruitful and nurturing life. As well as being wise stewards of the earth's resources and for exercising leadership and dominion; they were to be a team of equals.

Clearly there are implications for marriage and the traditional roles of men and women in this passage.

Unit 4 – God’s Desire for Unity in Marriage

Let’s go back to scripture again and look at what God intended for unity in marriage. Now let’s re-read Genesis 2: 22-24 and then I’ll have some questions for you.

Genesis 2:22-24

22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

So, turn to your workbooks for this module and answer these four questions:

1. What is the reason that God says a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife?
2. Why should he do that?
3. What did this unity look like in the relationship between Adam and Eve and therefore, what did God intend unity to look like for all marriages?
4. What did God intend unity to look like for all marriages?

When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Here are some of the answer’s others have given in the past:

- That the woman is flesh of Adam’s flesh. Adam was joyful that her flesh and bones were like his. (Gen. 2:23)

- That God could have created woman from the dust of the ground, but he chose to make her from man's flesh and blood thus emphasizing that they are part of the same body.
- That God gave marriage as a gift to Adam and Eve.
- That marriage in God's eyes is about unity, (joined as one flesh) and intimacy.
- That there is no hierarchy, no shame in their nakedness because there was no 'other' person.
- And that God's creation was not complete until he made woman; they were given equality in being and in function.

Here is a quote from Patrick and Claudette McDonald's book, 'Marital Spirituality as Spiritual Companionship - "We know that the first gift of God and the (unavoidable) challenge of a marital spirituality are that we must not possess one another. We are called to give back to the Creator the gift of equality, respect, and thoughtful mutuality with which human life began."

Now let's think about how this compares to the norms of your own society, wherever you come from. Think about your parent's marriage, and that of your friends and relatives - as well as your own if you are married. I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module and work on the following question.

Think about your parent's marriage, and that of your friends/relatives - as well as your own, if you are married.

Describe how couples make their marriage relationship work in their day-to-day life. In other words, when it comes to practical things like taking care of the house, child rearing, earning money, managing money, decision making of all kinds, etc. What are the cultural norms – that you see - for these kinds of things?

When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Now I realize that your answers will vary depending on your culture, but others, from all over the world, who have taken this course have said:

- All financial decisions are made separately, or are made by the husband
- Child raising is the responsibility of the wife
- Housework is the woman's responsibility
- The cooking is the responsibility of the women
- Keeping the car running is the responsibility of the husband

- Earning money is primarily the job of the husband

In some cultures, there is a very clear separation of the roles in the marriage; in other cultures, there is more mutuality and equality. But even in those parts of the world where there is more mutual support, we will often find that husbands take on certain roles, and the wives take on other roles.

Why do you think we don't see perfect unity in marriages around us? Well, the answer is that sin has distorted everything, everywhere in our world—including marriage!

Marriages are broken everywhere. The models we all have in our cultures are far from what God intended.

Unit 5 – The Consequences of Sin on Marital Relationships: God's Plan Distorted

We're now going to look at the impact of the events described in Genesis 3 on marital relationships.

Read through Genesis 3 and as you do, jot down any word or phrase which seems to relate to potential problems in marriage in your workbooks for this module.

Genesis 3

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3** but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. **5** "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,
"Cursed are you above all livestock

and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

15

And I will put enmity

between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,

and you will strike his heel."

16 To the woman he said,

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;

with painful labor you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband,

and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you;

through painful toil you will eat food from it

all the days of your life.

18

It will produce thorns and thistles for you,

and you will eat the plants of the field.

19

By the sweat of your brow

you will eat your food

until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”

20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

22 And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” **23** So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. **24** After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

How did things get broken and what evidence did you find that brokenness entered the relationship? Write down your answers and when you are done, click continue.

After reading Genesis 3 and when asked the question - “How did things get broken and what evidence did you find that brokenness entered the relationship, others have said:

- Disobedience severed the relationship between Adam and Eve, so that instead of perceiving the world through the same eyes, in unity, they became divided – torn in two.
- That injustice and defensiveness entered the world as they accused one another and became ashamed of their nakedness.
- Their separation from God brought an end to the life of equality and mutuality he had intended for them. The future would be very different, and the freedom and unity experienced under God’s original design would be replaced by pain, hardship and power struggles.
- This chapter initiates patriarchal thinking and opens the door for male dominion over women: subordination replaces mutual responsibility.
- And, thus, patriarchy becomes a manifestation of human sin, though it was never God’s intention

So, to sum up, the impact on Adam and Eve was brokenness in the marriage relationship – for example, tensions, conflict, injustices, broken trust and power battles.

Is this what we see today around us? What do you think?

Now, let’s take this one step further.

How does the brokenness between husbands and wives impact:

- Their children?
- And the community around them?

Well, under the category of children it impacts them by:

- The fact that many children are insecure, trying to find the love missing in the home and searching elsewhere.
- That they can grow into criminals, violence sometimes results, failure at school
- That they are unable to create a loving family themselves
- And that they are unlikely to become productive citizens

Under the category of the community, it is impacted by:

- Husbands getting caught up in drinking or drugs and abandoning their families
- Husbands seeking out other sexual partners, feeding prostitution in the community and breaking up other families
- Wives not being able to support the children alone and becoming dependent on others so rather than creating wealth and stability for the community, they need to seek that from the community.
- The fact that neither husbands nor wives gets further education to become more productive, so as a consequence, community leaders are lost.
- The church losing support so it cannot do as much in the community
- The financial aspect of less wealth created generally. For example, no jobs are created
- The loss of positive models for the community
- And crime can increase.

Because families are the core unit of every society, when husbands and wives have a broken relationship it impacts everyone. As families are impacted so are the communities in which they reside. The perpetual impact of broken relationships on societies around the world is devastating.

Unit 6 – Redressing the Consequences of Sin on Marriage

We know that Jesus has redeemed us from sin and we looked carefully at what that means to us in Module 4. Now we will look at how this applies to marriage. So how do we as Christian men and women own our responsibility to redress the consequences of sin and restore the equality intended when God created us?

Marriage seems to be the best opportunity for exemplifying equality and unity. If we fail to find unity in our own marriages, we are unlikely to find it in our families, our communities or our churches. And yet we know that, for the most part, Biblical principles of marriage are not practiced even within the Christian body.

How can we as Christians engage in God’s redemptive plan for humankind? How can men and women seek God’s restoration and hear the good news of Genesis 1? What will it take to embrace the innate goodness in ourselves, and that of others, made in the image of God, so that we truly respect the dignity of each person? What would this look like in marriage?

Let’s start by taking a look at what God has in mind for our redemption.

In Ephesians 5 Paul gives us some clues about how God’s plan of redemption might come about and what this could look like in our own marriage relationships.

Now, let’s read through Ephesians 5. Turn to your workbooks, where it is printed out, and read it through. Then read it a second time and highlight or circle every phrase that describes what it looks like to be filled with the Holy Spirit and imitating Christ. When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Here are verses that others have highlighted in the past:

Verse 2: And walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Verse 4: Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, **but rather thanksgiving**

Verses 8-11: Live as children of light **9** (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) **10** and find out what pleases the Lord. **11** Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

Verses 15-16: Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity,

Verse 17: Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Verse 18-20: Instead, be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, **20** always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 21-22: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

Verses 24-25: Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Verse 28: husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Verse 31: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

And verse 33: However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Two verses stand out in this passage as critical to understanding how the rest is possible.

Verse 18. Without being "*filled with the Spirit*" the rest of the passage is impossible.

Being "*filled with the Spirit*" enables us to love, submit and respect. It enables us to be thankful and to stay away from evil. It enables us to be like Christ in all of these things.

And **verse 21** is the other key to the remainder of the passage on marriage. It begins simply with the phrase, "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ". That is the overarching message from which the rest flows. *If we are filled with the Spirit and if we submit to one another, we will live out the other instructions.*

Now, how does Jesus play the role of husband to his bride, the Church? Let's re-read Ephesians verses 25-33 and then I'll have a question for you.

Ephesians 5:25-33 New International Version (NIV)

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her **26** to make her holy, cleansing^[a] her by the washing with water through the word, **27** and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. **28** In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— **30** for we are members of his body. **31** "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."^[b] **32** This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. **33** However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

So, the question I have for you is: What are the behaviours Jesus demonstrated in his role as husband that provide a model for us of what a husband does for his bride? Turn to your workbooks and when you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

In answering this question; What are the behaviours Jesus demonstrated in his role as husband that provide a model for us of what a husband does for his bride, others have said:

- That Christ loved the church so much he gave himself up for her
- That through this sacrificial love he prepared her to be radiant, holy and blameless
- That Christ's care for the church brings the body into unity with him
- And so marriage is a human echo of Christ's relationship with the church and Paul reminds us of the nature of the 'headship' that we are to imitate

Now, let's think about, what following Christ's example looks like. What does it mean to be "head" of the wife?

What have you been taught about 'headship' in marriage? Is it Biblically based?

Well, Jesus 'headship' is more about humility and servanthood than commanding obedience. It is totally consistent with the way Jesus cares for his bride. Verses 25-33 outline what radical self-submission actually looks like in practice. They describe a well-nourished bride who has been loved into greatness. This beautiful portrait of Jesus' self-giving, agape love is a call from Paul to husbands to be there for their wives with self-giving, nurturing, serving love. For that is the way Christ loved the church; and husbands and wives are to be imitators of Christ (5:2)

So, God's plan of redemption here puts the Holy Spirit at the center, to empower us to be imitators of Christ, reflecting the image of God in a 'Blessed Alliance'.

Unit 7 – God's Vision for His Redeemed People

Now let's look at Revelation to see God's vision for his redeemed people. Let's read Revelation chapter 19:1-8 with a focus on verses 7 and 8.

Revelation 19:1-8

1 After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:
"Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

2

for true and just are his judgments.

He has condemned the great prostitute

who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

3 And again they shouted:

"Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

"Amen, Hallelujah!"

5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

"Praise our God,

all you his servants,

you who fear him,

both great and small!"

6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

7

Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.

8

Fine linen, bright and clean,
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

So, what is being described here in verses 7 and 8? Well, others in the past have said:

- That it is God's vision of marriage (Rev: 19:7) and it shows the church of Christ, the people of God as 'the Bride' and the Lamb, Jesus himself, as 'the Groom'.
- That Jesus' deep love for the church and his commitment to it are symbolized by the marriage covenant.
- And that in verse 7 the church is described as finally ready to enter into the long-awaited union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's take a look at Hosea 2:16-23. Focus on verse 16 and 19.

Hosea 2:16-23

16

"In that day," declares the Lord,
"you will call me 'my husband';
you will no longer call me 'my master.'"

17

I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips;
no longer will their names be invoked.

18

In that day I will make a covenant for them
with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky
and the creatures that move along the ground.

Bow and sword and battle

I will abolish from the land,
so that all may lie down in safety.

19

I will betroth you to me forever;
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,
in love and compassion.

20

I will betroth you in faithfulness,
and you will acknowledge the Lord.

21

"In that day I will respond,"
declares the Lord—
"I will respond to the skies,
and they will respond to the earth;

22

and the earth will respond to the grain,
the new wine and the olive oil,
and they will respond to Jezreel.

23

I will plant her for myself in the land;
I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.'
I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people';
and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

So, our betrothal to Christ takes place at the point of salvation and the wedding occurs when Jesus comes to take his bride. Just as a husband and wife are one, Scripture teaches that Christ and the church are united as one. Jesus' relationship with the church is therefore an example to us of the relationship he wants husbands to have with their brides.

Unit 8 – Mary and Joseph, a model of marriage

Let's take a look together at the relationship between Mary and Joseph and the model this provides for a Christian marriage. This is particularly interesting because we know they lived in a very patriarchal society much like some of ours today.

Let's read Matthew 1:18-24, and Matt. 13:53-58 and then I'll have some questions for you.

Matthew 1:18-24

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19** Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. **20** But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: **23** "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). **24** When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Matthew 13:53-58

53 When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. **54** Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. **55** "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? **56** Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" **57** And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home." **58** And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

So, here are the questions I have for you:

1. What do we learn about the relationship each of them has with God?
2. What was the cost Joseph paid for what he did?
3. What kind of picture of a marriage relationship and family life would you envision following the birth of Jesus?
4. What does headship look like now?

Turn to your workbooks for this module and when you have completed answering these questions, click the continue button.

Here is how others in the past have answered these questions.

- Each of them had an intimate spirit-filled relationship with God which enabled them to joyfully submit to his will
- Mary would have been stoned for adultery, but Joseph protected her.
- He defied the importance of social status and power, refused to defend his honor and risked public humiliation in taking her home to be his wife.
- He put Mary's interests ahead of his own, closing up his carpentry business to support her calling
- Joseph fearlessly supports his wife through everything, joining her in her shame and then becoming a refugee in a hostile land.
- Joseph and Mary demonstrated a life of self-sacrifice and love for one another lived out in a righteousness that came from God. Their partnership was a Holy one, sacrificially loving one another, reverently obedient and surrendered to God's will.

Now, I have another exercise for you. Recalling what we have just seen of Joseph and Mary's lives, and re-reading Ephesians 5:21, What does it mean for a wife and husband to submit to Christ and to one another in their lives?

Write down your thoughts in your workbooks and click continue when you are done.

Here are some thoughts others have given in the past:

- Both sacrificial love and joyful submission represent servanthood; putting our spouse's needs ahead of our own so that God can be glorified.
- As **wives** their choice is **joyful submission** to our husbands in everything (verse 24) and respect (verse 33). That does not sound like subservience or enforced obedience, but a heartfelt response 'out of reverence to Christ'

Now, this doesn't mean following along quietly in order to keep the peace – or enabling a husband's bad behaviors by turning a blind eye or covering for his sinfulness. Neither does it mean allowing wives to be taken advantage of or abused. When we allow ourselves to be run into the ground, we are no good to anyone else. This is about making a wise and free decision to be a helper in a husband's life – a fully-fledged partner who can speak truth and contribute unique gifts to a family's life

- And lastly, one of the thoughts was, we have freedom to chose **that** reverence because of the radical nature of Christ's earthly life – his own free submission as

God's suffering servant motivated by **sacrificial love**. Thus our submission, as husbands or wives is based on freedom, not authority. The authority Christ had as a leader implied sacrifice not the kind of Lordship that was common at the time.

As we conclude this unit, let's read the following extract from Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian's book: 'Beyond Sex Roles'

"The concept of headship in the NT refers to the function of Christ as the fountainhead of life and growth and to his servant role of provider and sustainer.... Because Christ is the wellspring of the church's life and provides it with existence and sustenance, in return the church serves him in loving dependency and in recognition of him as the source of its life. Because man as the fountainhead of the woman's existence was originally used to supply her with her very life, and because he continues to love her sacrificially as his own body in marriage, in return a Christian wife binds herself to her husband in a similar relationship of servant submission that expresses their oneness. The imposition of authority structure upon this exquisite balance of reciprocity would paganize the marriage relationship and make the Christ/church paradigm irrelevant to it."

Unit 9 – Proverbs 31—A Marriage Modeling Mutual Trust, Respect and Interdependence

Now we are going to look at a fascinating model of marriage from Proverbs 31. It is good for us to understand that this passage is from the King's Mother. She is giving him her wisdom on the choices he should make including choosing a noble wife. Let's read Proverbs 31 and then I'll have an exercise for you.

Proverbs 31

1 The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him.

2

Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb!

Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers!

3

Do not spend your strength on women,
your vigor on those who ruin kings.

4

It is not for kings, Lemuel—
it is not for kings to drink wine,
not for rulers to crave beer,

5
lest they drink and forget what has been decreed,
and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.

6
Let beer be for those who are perishing,
wine for those who are in anguish!

7
Let them drink and forget their poverty
and remember their misery no more.

8
Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.

9
Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Epilogue: The Wife of Noble Character

10
A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.

11
Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.

12
She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.

13
She selects wool and flax
and works with eager hands.

14
She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from afar.

15
She gets up while it is still night;
she provides food for her family
and portions for her female servants.

16
She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.

17

She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.

18

She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.

19

In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

20

She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.

21

When it snows, she has no fear for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

22

She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.

23

Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.

24

She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.

25

She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.

26

She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

27

She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28

Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:

29

"Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all."

30

Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

31

Honor her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Now, turn to your workbooks for this module and I want you to: Identify words or phrases that might enable a marriage relationship to model mutual trust, respect and interdependence.

When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Here are some of the words and phrases that others have identified in the past:

- That her husband had full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value
- That he is respected at the city gate because of her
- That she brings him good all her days
- That she's conscientious and committed to the health of her family
- That she understands the economy and good stewardship
- That she cares about the poor and needy
- That she is clothed in fine linen and purple' (Rev.19:8)
- That she has strength and is a wise and loving counselor
- That her husband and children praise her with joy
- And that she fears the Lord

This is an amazing picture of mutual trust, respect and interdependence in marriage. What is especially fascinating is seeing the fruit that results in the marriage, in each person and in the community as a whole.

Now we're going to watch a short video and look at the implications of how one couple lives out this call on their lives.

So, after watching this video, here are the questions I have for you.

1. Describe the notion of sacrificial love displayed in this relationship?
2. How does this mirror the way Christ loves us?

3. What do you think might be the impact of this on each of them and on others who know them?

Turn to your workbooks for this module and write down your answers. Click continue when you are done.

Hopefully, we have learned there is no inferior gender and that any behavior that attempts to control the other is devaluing and at odds with the Biblical view, which calls us to share the authority, bestowed upon us. The Biblical concept of headship refers to the nature of man's partnership with his wife in her process of becoming a mature and complete woman as in Proverbs 31. No less important is his wife's commitment to bring her own unique gifts, servanthood, strength and nurturing power to enable and encourage him to be all that he was created to be.

Now, I have one final exercise for you in this module. Turn to your workbooks and – as a reflection exercise - answer the following 4 questions. When you have completed this exercise, you can begin the next module.

1. What are the 5 - 7 key areas of decision-making that you believe couples have to face in your culture? For example, finances, child raising, responsibility for the household, etc.
2. In light of what we have studied, have your ideas changed about how these decisions might get made. How might we address these with greater mutuality to reflect the image of Christ and his bride?
3. Which of these issues are most difficult to discuss and why?
4. Which would you like to discuss again with your spouse? Or, if single, which do you think are sufficiently complex and fundamental that they require agreement before marriage?

Module 7

Common Questions and Next Steps

Unit 1 – Introduction to Women and Men Leading Churches and Organizations

Before we begin to discuss women and men working together let's spend a few minutes reflecting on what we have learned so far in this workshop and whether that might impact how we think about our relationships at work.

Do you think the kind of mutuality in listening and talking to one another about important family issues that we discussed in the final exercise of the last module, can be replicated in the workplace? If not, why not?

Well, when we asked this question in the past others have said:

- It needs to happen in marriages before it can happen at work
- Gender equality is an issue in both secular and non-secular environments
- Men still hold all the top jobs
- Women are responsible for more of the home/family duties so there's no time to make progress in a career
- Girls still don't have the same educational opportunities

Let's think about this by listening to this quote from Eric Labaye, the Managing Director of the French section of the business consultancy Mckenzie. He said:

"As women represent over half of the global talent pool, it is clear to us that they should be at the forefront of the economic and social scene, not just out of a sense of fairness, but to ensure that the very best minds, men's and women's alike, are brought together to address the challenges that society faces".

When we have shared this quote with students in the past, and asked for their thoughts, they have given us comments such as:

- How can we show our commitment to the Great Commission when we create conditions in which only half the potential of men and women, working in unity, is engaged in our churches and organizations

- Failure to address this in our churches could mean we lose our best female talent to the business world where they are learning to develop their God-given potential.
- The male workforce is significantly compromised by the absence of women.

The creators of this workshop have no assumptions that women are inherently better leaders than men (or that men are inherently better leaders than women!), or that, by nature, they will create a more loving, serving, personally-fulfilled workforce:

- We know of plenty of women who have issues of power and control, and even aggression.
- There are also plenty of men who are loving, kind and compassionate.

We believe that both women and men should be enabled to use their gifts and work together to accomplish God's purposes here on earth.

- This goes back to all we discussing in Sessions 2 and 3 about the Trinity and God's image being in both men and women. And that he called both men and women and equipped them and said that it's not good for man to be alone.

God's vision was that the unified relationship between Adam and Eve would reflect His image.

- God has wanted this unity in our relationships ever since, as Jesus reminds us in his prayer in John 17:21-23, where, in praying for those who would follow him, he prayed: "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me".

Our greatest threat as Christian leaders is in attempting to accomplish our goals in isolation from one another. Neither men nor women can be successful without the other. Each of us is more likely to be our best self when we are in cross-gender synergistic relationships joining forces and building something that is bigger than ourselves. God's purpose for the world is built on these principles.

Unit 2 – Scriptural Examples of Women and Men Working Together

Let's reflect back on two examples of divinely inspired partnerships to see how this works:

What can you remember from our discussion of Esther and Mordecai? How did they relate to one another and why did they need one another?

Well:

- They related to one another with humility and careful listening, submitting to one another and caring for each other.
- They needed each other because they were in different positions and had different opportunities as well as different gifts.
- They had to work together or the goal of saving their people could not have been accomplished.

And, what can you remember from our discussion of Joseph and Mary? How did they relate to one another and how did they work together?

In this case:

- Mary needed Joseph's protection and acceptance. Joseph loved Mary and wanted the best for her.
- They both decided to obey God's call.
- Only together could they create the family Jesus needed in which to grow up.
- And working together they protected his life from Herod and fled to Egypt

Let's look about one more Biblical example of a man and woman working together to accomplish God's purposes. This is a married couple as well.

First let's read Acts 18, Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Timothy 4:19, then go back and read Acts 18:26 – 30

When you have completed this, I'll have some questions for you.

Acts 18

1 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. **2** There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, **3** and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. **4** Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. **6** But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

7 Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. **8** Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. **10** For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." **11** So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

12 While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment. **13** "This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law."

14 Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, "If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. **15** But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things." **16** So he drove them off. **17** Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes

the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever.

Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. **19** They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. **20** When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. **21** But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. **22** When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. **25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor[a] and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. **26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. **27** When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. **28** For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Romans 16:3

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 16:9

9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

2 Timothy 4:19

19 Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

Acts 18:26-28

26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

27 When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. **28** For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

So, the questions I have for you are:

- What do we know about Aquila and Priscilla
- How did they work with Apollos and what was the result of their work together with him?

Turn to your workbooks for this module, and when you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Well:

- We know they are only mentioned in scripture together
- That they are close friends of Paul and he says they risked their lives for him
- That together they brought Apollos home and taught him more fully.
- And the result was that Apollos became very fruitful and was used by God for others because of the way he had been equipped by Priscilla and Aquila.

While we do not know a lot about their lives, what we do know tells us that they are good examples of a man and a woman who needed each other to flourish as God's image bearers. It was by working together they accomplished God's purposes.

Let's keep exploring together how we, like Mordecai and Esther, Mary and Joseph and Priscilla and Aquila, can best work collaboratively with mutual respect and mutual accountability.

Unit 3 – Finding out about Gender Equality in your work place

Let's think about what it is in our culture that makes it difficult for women to rise into leadership positions in companies. For example in my culture, so much mentoring within a company used to go on at the golf course or the men's club where women were not welcome. To some extent it is still true today. We refer to that phenomena as "the good 'ole boys club". It really means that the informal networking opportunities were cut off to women making it hard to build the relationships that allow them to rise in leadership.

Think about your culture where you live, and answer the following question:

What norms and/or values within the culture of your society support the unequal representation of women in large business organizations?

Turn to your workbooks for this module and when you have completed your answer, click the continue button.

Well, others have said that those norms or values were:

- A belief that men are to lead
- A belief that women are incapable of leadership
- A lack of facilities for child care at businesses
- And a lack of equal education for women

To what extent are these societal norms reflected in your Christian organizations and churches? Do these same things make it difficult for women to rise to leadership in the churches or Christian organizations? What do you think?

Once again, we probably find that the Church and Christian organizations look a lot like the culture around them, rather than responding in a counter cultural way

that brings life and change into the culture and models a better and more effective way.

Unit 4 – Why Might Gender Equality in the Workplace be Valuable?

Why Might Gender Equality in the Workplace be Valuable? Why does it matter? Why should we want gender equality in the workplace? Why would it be valuable?

Let's look at some quotes and then work on an exercise in your workbooks.

- “Countries with a high number of women in parliament enjoy lower levels of corruption: women are less likely to be involved in bribery and corruption is less severe where women make up a large share of senior government officials as well as the labor force.... There is a strong correlation between women holding political office and the overall economic competitiveness of a nation.” *World Bank research.*
- **McKinsey & Company**, an international management-consulting firm, that helps leading corporations and organizations make improvements in their performance, carried out a study of female leadership (reported in ‘**Women Matter**’ 2007). They demonstrated a link between the presence of women on teams and their organization’s superior financial performance.”
- “Many business leaders both male and female have come to recognize that companies with more gender-balanced leadership teams out-perform those with less gender balance.”
- “The male style tends to focus more on being in the spotlight, and the female style tends to focus on bringing people together to get things done. The very thing that makes the best female leaders very successful also makes them less visible.” *The Harvard Business Review article (‘Great Leaders who make the mix work’ 2013)*
- “Because women account for one-half of a country’s potential talent base, a nation’s competitiveness in the long term depends significantly on whether and how it educates and utilizes its women.”
The World Economic Forum’s Gender gap report

Now, I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module, where you will also find the quotes we just read, and in 3 to 5 points, summarize what they say. When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

What did you see when you read these quotes? What is the benefit of having women in leadership? Well, others in the past have said:

- There is less corruption in government
- There can be higher economic results for the nation
- That companies grow faster and make more money
- That women leaders lead more effectively by bringing people together to get things done, so they get better results
- And that 50% of the talent pool anywhere is women, so if you fail to educate and give opportunities for women, you are losing out on their talents and you will fall behind

This is just a small sampling of the research available, but it continually points to the conclusion that equal opportunities for women result in greater gains for the nation, company or organization.

Or put simply, when Bill Gates was asked in Saudi Arabia whether he thought their nation could become a world economic power, he responded, *"Well, if you're not fully utilizing half the talent in the country, you're not going to get too close to the top."*

Unit 5 – SO.....What Strengths Do Some Women Leaders Bring?

Approximately 17% of world leaders today are women. As of 2015 there were 22 female Presidents/Heads of State.

Around the world, the current female heads of state are in: Liberia, Namibia, Central African Republic, Malawi, Chile, Bahamas, Germany, Grenada, Brazil, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Bangladesh, Kosovo, Latvia, Croatia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Finland and Switzerland.

Currently in the world, some of the prominent female corporate, financial and political leaders are:

Janet Yellen (Chair of Federal Reserve, USA); **Christine Lagard** (Managing Director of International Monetary Fund – a 188 country organization); **Hilary Clinton** (Secretary of State for US 2008-2012, currently running for President in the USA); **Mary Barra** (CEO of General Motors); **Sheryl Sandberg** (COO Facebook); **Virginia Rometty** (CEO IBM); **Margaret Chan** (World Health Organization – UN); **Arundhati Bhattacharya** (MD of State Bank of India); **Sri Mulyani Indranati** (MD World Bank) and **Carly Fiorina** (ex CEO of Hewlett/Packard and now running for President in the USA).

Do you think there are particular strengths that women bring to positions of leadership at the national, global or boardroom level?

Well, they tend to be:

- More nurturing
- More inclusive and enabling
- And they tend to Lead more from the middle and are less hierarchical

Let's look deeper and see what the research says about this subject.

We are going to read through 3 studies and then answer the same question for all three. Don't worry, they will be re-printed in your workbooks.

Study 1.

A study of female leadership by McKinsey & Company, examines leadership practices among female managers and concludes that these will be critical in meeting the expected challenges companies will face over the coming years. In this study, McKinsey identified nine leadership behaviors that increase organizational performance:

- Participative decision making;
- Providing a Role model;
- Inspiration;
- Establishing Expectations and rewards;
- People development;
- Intellectual stimulation;
- Efficient communication;
- Individualistic decision making; and

- Control and corrective action.

McKinsey found that men adopt two of these nine leadership behaviors more frequently than women: Control and corrective action, and Individualistic decision making.

There was no significant difference between men and women in the frequency of use for Intellectual stimulation and Efficient communication.

Women use the remaining five leadership behaviors more than men: People development; Expectation and rewards; Providing a Role model; Inspiration; and Participative decision making.

Through their research, McKinsey were able to offer a fact-based explanation for the superior performance of companies with more women on their management teams.

Study 2.

In a study first published in 2012 and reported in **the Harvard Business Review**, **Bob Sherwin**, measured how men and women are perceived differently in terms of sixteen competencies. This study included 16,000 leaders (2/3 male and 1/3 female), and indicates significant evidence that women's overall leadership effectiveness is higher than men's.

The highest differences were: 'taking initiative', displaying integrity and honesty, and driving for results, where women were seen as more effective than their male counterparts. Sherwin finds this surprising as most people they talked to expected women to be better in nurturing competencies such as developing others, relationship building, collaboration and teamwork. Sherwin's research shows that women were seen as more effective at getting things done, being role models and delivering results.

"These skills", Sherwin asserts, "describe leaders who take on difficult challenges, ensure that people act with integrity, and who simply achieve challenging results." Further evidence shows that some of our stereotypes are incorrect and as women move up the ladder in an organization, they are perceived even more positively in areas, which have traditionally been seen as male bastions.

Sherwin observes an additional competency that women continue to seek feedback on how they are doing as they rise within organizations, so that they can make adjustments to align more effectively with shared goals. Whereas men typically assume they are fine by this stage and that they really don't need much feedback. Keep in mind that this

research is representative of corporate culture in America. Here, and in most other western cultures, the objective of seeking and giving feedback is to deepen self-awareness and learn how to become more effective in our roles. Thus, it is seen as a core component of leadership competencies. It is quite counter-cultural in many other parts of the world.

Sherwin ends his contribution, suggesting: "To the degree that senior executives and boards of directors are putting men into senior positions, fearing that women will not perform well at higher levels, we hope that this information adds to the assurance that they need not worry about that".

Study 3.

In a **Harvard Business Review** article, '**Great Leaders Who Make the Mix Work**', **Groysberg and Connolly**, report their research into why some leaders commit to inclusive cultures. The 24 executives they interviewed were from a variety of secular organizations around the globe and were at different stages in their journey towards creating a more inclusive culture. They saw advancing diversity as a strategic and moral imperative and 'approached inclusivity as a personal mission'. They agreed that this meant the environment encouraged every person to contribute and be part of the success of the organization. In doing this both men and women could be their authentic selves, valued for their talents and gifts, and integrally connected to others who share the common goal and purpose of the work.

This research found that these executives believe:

- Men and women working together with their different perspectives challenge each other. Often there is dissent and far reaching discussion, which goes much deeper and can often be more creative in finding solutions.
- Mixed teams are better able to reflect the people they serve because they are in touch with a wider variety of audiences.
- 80% of those interviewed had experienced women in the workplace as:
 - More relationship-oriented,
 - More collaborative,
 - Better listeners,
 - Less political,
 - Less likely to define themselves by their careers

- More empathetic and reasonable.
- And more likely to focus on completing the job at hand and to neglect to position themselves for recognition or promotion, while men were more apt to seek attention.

Keep in mind that our strengths can often be the source of our weaknesses and certainly when the qualities outlined are over-played they can cause consequences that can become worse than not having the quality in the first place! However, in these organizations, these qualities were valued and productive to successful performance in the market place.

So now the question I have for you is:

What might be some blind spots or weaknesses of an all male leadership team?

Write down your answers – for each of the studies – in your workbooks for this module and click the continue button when you are done.

Well, according to the research, blind spots or weaknesses of an all-male team might include:

- Less People development
- Less Participative decision making
- Less Taking initiative
- Not Driving for results
- Less Honesty and Integrity
- Less Collaboration
- And all male teams might be more political and less “servant-like”

As Christians, it shouldn’t surprise us that all-male leadership teams might have some blind spots or weaknesses. Why do I say that? Do you remember what we learned in Genesis?

Let’s re-read Genesis 1:27-28 and Genesis 2:18, then I’ll have a couple of questions for you.

Genesis 1:27-28

27

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Genesis 2:18

18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

So, the two questions I have for you are:

1. What would you say is God's strategy for building his kingdom on earth?
2. Did he intend for men to work with men, and women to work with women? Or does this sound like a shared mission?

Turn to your workbooks for this module, and when you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Here is what others have said in the past:

- That God created men and women to work together to subdue the earth
- That He intended for women and men to help each other
- And that we are all created in His Image but he could not put all of His characteristics in one human, so we need each other.

God always knows what is best for us because he created and designed us. The corporate world has noticed this, but yet we as Christians who should know this, have often just followed the culture, instead of our Biblical understanding. We need to recover our Godly strategic partnership, in which men and women are working together to fulfill their global mandate.

Unit 6 – A Call to be Counter-Cultural

Most of us live and work in situations that do not give women and men the opportunity to equally use their gifts and talents because we live in a broken and sinful world. As we have seen, the Bible is set in a patriarchal culture that did not give women an equal opportunity to use their leadership gifts. So let's look at examples from the Bible of women who used their gifts to save their people in spite of the culture and see what we can learn from their examples.

Let's read passages about Ruth and Naomi, Abigail, Rahab, Deborah and Priscilla. When we are done, I'll have 3 questions for you about each passage.

We will read Ruth chapters 2 and 3, 1 Samuel 24: 14-44, Joshua chapter 2, Judges chapters 4 and 5 and Acts 18: 18-28.

Ruth Chapters 2 and 3

1 Now Naomi had a relative on her husband's side, a man of standing from the clan of Elimelek, whose name was Boaz.

2 And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."

Naomi said to her, "Go ahead, my daughter." 3 So she went out, entered a field and began to glean behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelek.

4 Just then Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, "The Lord be with you!"

"The Lord bless you!" they answered.

5 Boaz asked the overseer of his harvesters, "Who does that young woman belong to?"

6 The overseer replied, "She is the Moabite who came back from Moab with Naomi. 7 She said, 'Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.' She came into the field and has remained here from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter."

8 So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me. 9 Watch the

field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the women. I have told the men not to lay a hand on you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.”

10 At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, “Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?”

11 Boaz replied, “I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. 12 May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”

13 “May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,” she said. “You have put me at ease by speaking kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servants.”

14 At mealtime Boaz said to her, “Come over here. Have some bread and dip it in the wine vinegar.”

When she sat down with the harvesters, he offered her some roasted grain. She ate all she wanted and had some left over. 15 As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, “Let her gather among the sheaves and don’t reprimand her. 16 Even pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don’t rebuke her.”

17 So Ruth gleaned in the field until evening. Then she threshed the barley she had gathered, and it amounted to about an ephah. 18 She carried it back to town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gathered. Ruth also brought out and gave her what she had left over after she had eaten enough.

19 Her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you!”

Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working. “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” she said.

20 “The Lord bless him!” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead.” She added, “That man is our close relative; he is one of our guardian-redeemers.”

21 Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain.'"

22 Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with the women who work for him, because in someone else's field you might be harmed."

23 So Ruth stayed close to the women of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law. Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor

1 One day Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi said to her, "My daughter, I must find a home for you, where you will be well provided for. 2 Now Boaz, with whose women you have worked, is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor. 3 Wash, put on perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. 4 When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do."

5 "I will do whatever you say," Ruth answered. 6 So she went down to the threshing floor and did everything her mother-in-law told her to do.

7 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down. 8 In the middle of the night something startled the man; he turned—and there was a woman lying at his feet!

9 "Who are you?" he asked.

"I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a guardian-redeemer of our family."

10 "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor.

11 And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All the people of my town know that you are a woman of noble character. 12 Although it is true that I am a guardian-redeemer of our family, there is another who is more closely related than I. 13 Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to do his duty as your guardian-redeemer, good; let him redeem you. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives I will do it. Lie here until morning."

14 So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before anyone could be recognized; and he said, "No one must know that a woman came to the threshing floor."

15 He also said, "Bring me the shawl you are wearing and hold it out." When she did so, he poured into it six measures of barley and placed the bundle on her. Then he went back to town.

16 When Ruth came to her mother-in-law, Naomi asked, "How did it go, my daughter?"

Then she told her everything Boaz had done for her 17 and added, "He gave me these six measures of barley, saying, 'Don't go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.'"

18 Then Naomi said, "Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today."

1 Samuel 24:14-22

14 "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? 15 May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."

16 When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. 17 "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. 18 You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. 19 When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today. 20 I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. 21 Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family."

22 So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Joshua 2

1 Then Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two spies from Shittim. "Go, look over the land," he said, "especially Jericho." So they went and entered the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

2 The king of Jericho was told, "Look, some of the Israelites have come here tonight to spy out the land." 3 So the king of Jericho sent this message to Rahab: "Bring out the men who came to you and entered your house, because they have come to spy out the whole land."

4 But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them. She said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they had come from. 5 At dusk, when it was time to close the city gate, they left. I don't know which way they went. Go after them quickly. You may catch up with them." 6 (But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax she had laid out on the roof.) 7 So the men set out in pursuit of the spies on the road that leads to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as the pursuers had gone out, the gate was shut.

8 Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof 9 and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 10 We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

12 "Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign 13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them—and that you will save us from death."

14 "Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you don't tell what we are doing, we will treat you kindly and faithfully when the Lord gives us the land."

15 So she let them down by a rope through the window, for the house she lived in was part of the city wall. 16 She said to them, "Go to the hills so the pursuers will not find you. Hide yourselves there three days until they return, and then go on your way."

17 Now the men had said to her, "This oath you made us swear will not be binding on us
18 unless, when we enter the land, you have tied this scarlet cord in the window through
which you let us down, and unless you have brought your father and mother, your
brothers and all your family into your house. 19 If any of them go outside your house into
the street, their blood will be on their own heads; we will not be responsible. As for
those who are in the house with you, their blood will be on our head if a hand is laid on
them. 20 But if you tell what we are doing, we will be released from the oath you made
us swear."

21 "Agreed," she replied. "Let it be as you say."

So she sent them away, and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

22 When they left, they went into the hills and stayed there three days, until the pursuers
had searched all along the road and returned without finding them. 23 Then the two
men started back. They went down out of the hills, forded the river and came to Joshua
son of Nun and told him everything that had happened to them. 24 They said to Joshua,
"The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in
fear because of us."

Judges chapters 4 and 5

1 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead. 2 So the
Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the
commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. 3 Because he had nine
hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty
years, they cried to the Lord for help.

4 Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. 5 She
held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of
Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. 6 She sent for
Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of
Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun
and lead them up to Mount Tabor. 7 I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army,
with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'"

8 Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

9 "Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking,
the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman."

So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

12 When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. 15 At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

16 Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. 17 Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

18 Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

19 "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

20 "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'"

21 But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

22 Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

23 On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. 24 And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.

The Song of Deborah

1 On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

2 "When the princes in Israel take the lead,
when the people willingly offer themselves—
praise the Lord!

3 "Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers!
I, even I, will sing to[c] the Lord;
I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song.

4 "When you, Lord, went out from Seir,
when you marched from the land of Edom,
the earth shook, the heavens poured,
the clouds poured down water.

5 The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai,
before the Lord, the God of Israel.

6 "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned;
travelers took to winding paths.

7 Villagers in Israel would not fight;
they held back until I, Deborah, arose,

until I arose, a mother in Israel.

8 God chose new leaders

when war came to the city gates,

but not a shield or spear was seen

among forty thousand in Israel.

9 My heart is with Israel's princes,

with the willing volunteers among the people.

Praise the Lord!

10 "You who ride on white donkeys,

sitting on your saddle blankets,

and you who walk along the road,

consider

11 the voice of the singers at the watering places.

They recite the victories of the Lord,

the victories of his villagers in Israel.

"Then the people of the Lord

went down to the city gates.

12 'Wake up, wake up, Deborah!

Wake up, wake up, break out in song!

Arise, Barak!

Take captive your captives, son of Abinoam.'

13 "The remnant of the nobles came down;
the people of the Lord came down to me against the mighty.

14 Some came from Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek;
Benjamin was with the people who followed you.

From Makir captains came down,
from Zebulun those who bear a commander's staff.

15 The princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
yes, Issachar was with Barak,
sent under his command into the valley.

In the districts of Reuben
there was much searching of heart.

16 Why did you stay among the sheep pens
to hear the whistling for the flocks?

In the districts of Reuben
there was much searching of heart.

17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan.
And Dan, why did he linger by the ships?

Asher remained on the coast
and stayed in his coves.

18 The people of Zebulun risked their very lives;
so did Naphtali on the terraced fields.

19 "Kings came, they fought,

the kings of Canaan fought.

At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo,

they took no plunder of silver.

20 From the heavens the stars fought,

from their courses they fought against Sisera.

21 The river Kishon swept them away,

the age-old river, the river Kishon.

March on, my soul; be strong!

22 Then thundered the horses' hooves—

galloping, galloping go his mighty steeds.

23 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord.

'Curse its people bitterly,

because they did not come to help the Lord,

to help the Lord against the mighty.'

24 "Most blessed of women be Jael,

the wife of Heber the Kenite,

most blessed of tent-dwelling women.

25 He asked for water, and she gave him milk;

in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk.

26 Her hand reached for the tent peg,

her right hand for the workman's hammer.

She struck Sisera, she crushed his head,

she shattered and pierced his temple.

27 At her feet he sank,

he fell; there he lay.

At her feet he sank, he fell;

where he sank, there he fell—dead.

28 "Through the window peered Sisera's mother;

behind the lattice she cried out,

'Why is his chariot so long in coming?

Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed?'

29 The wisest of her ladies answer her;

indeed, she keeps saying to herself,

30 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoils:

a woman or two for each man,

colorful garments as plunder for Sisera,

colorful garments embroidered,

highly embroidered garments for my neck—

all this as plunder?'

31 "So may all your enemies perish, Lord!

But may all who love you be like the sun

when it rises in its strength.”

Then the land had peace forty years.

Acts 18:18-28

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. 19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. 21 But as he left, he promised, “I will come back if it is God’s will.” Then he set sail from Ephesus. 22 When he landed at Caesarea, he went up to Jerusalem and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

27 When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. 28 For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Alright, now for each passage of scripture I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module and answer these three questions:

1. In what ways did the woman you are reading about act contrary to the culture that she lived in?
2. In what ways did the men and women influence one another to stretch outside their comfort zones in accomplishing God’s purpose?

3. How do these examples offer wisdom that helps us to move toward stronger Kingdom alliances among men and women within the body of Christ?

When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

Here is what others have come up with in regards to Ruth and Naomi in Chapter 2 and 3 of Ruth. Ruth is a foreigner and newcomer to Israel, whose status as a widow gave her no rights, no voice, no place in society. Out of her sense of duty and commitment to Naomi, Ruth courageously calls powerful Boaz to respond beyond any obligation he has under Mosaic Laws for example, to 'let those who hunger glean' but to fulfill them in spirit, in other words, to feed the poor and rescue the family and the property of Elimelech. Carolyn Curtis James author of the books, 'Half the Church' and 'Malestrom', shares some profound insights into the healthy conflict of interest that Boaz is faced with and the 'extraordinary confluence of sacrificial love which brings Naomi, Ruth and Boaz together' Through Ruth's leadership, Boaz surpasses any traditional expectation of manhood in his counter-cultural stewardship of power on behalf of those who have no power or voice in the community, and finds an expanded understanding of obedience to God.

In regard to Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:14 – 44: Abigail, an intelligent woman usurps her husband's command and subverts his wickedness, by shrewdly appeasing an armed and dangerous David, thus preventing needless bloodshed. She shows us that submission to God's righteousness often means standing up in boldness, seemingly against the odds.

Regarding Rahab in Joshua 2: A Canaanite prostitute and notorious Jericho traitor risked her life to provide a hideout for Israelite spies and to embrace their God.

And Deborah in Judges chapters 4 and 5. Deborah, a prophetess and Israel's only female judge led with courage and wisdom. She calls Barak into battle, (in Judges 4:6) against Sisera and King Jabin's troops. When Barak insists that she goes too (perhaps as some kind of insurance policy that God would go with them!), Deborah doesn't hesitate for a minute and the armies of Jabin are defeated. It is hard to argue that women shouldn't lead in the light of this story. "Despite living in a male-dominated culture, she served as head of state, commander-in-chief and chief justice. Her achievement should put an end to debate about whether women can provide leadership", states Nigerian born scholar Tokunboh Adeyemo Now we need to be clear that Deborah is not seen as a 'fallback' solution to Barak's weak and cowardly male leadership. There is no mention of Barak being inadequate as a leader, in fact in Hebrews 11 he is acclaimed with the likes of David and Samuel 'who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised...whose weakness was turned to strength and who

became powerful in battle..”(Verses 32-34). It is the mutually dependent efforts of Deborah, Barak and Jael each playing the vital role they were called to, that leads Israel to victory over their enemies.

And finally, Priscilla in: Acts 18: 18 – 28. Priscilla, clearly convicted by Jesus’s life and teaching and Paul’s ministry, partners with her husband, Aquila, in setting Apollos straight in his understanding of the ‘way of God’. Together they strengthen Apollos to proclaim the gospel to countless people, risked their lives for Paul, and were appreciated by all the churches of the Gentiles (Romans 16:3) Perhaps worth noting, that Paul always puts Priscilla’s name first when it he refers to their ministry.

Unit 7 – Jesus’ Approach to Women

Jesus is always our best model when we are discussing anything, so let’s look together at how a male in a patriarchal society can work to bring more equality and the opportunity for women to also use their gifts. We’ve already looked at some of this in a prior section but will look at some different examples here.

What do you know about how the Jewish culture viewed women at the time of Jesus? What were some of the views of first century Judaism regarding women’s role?

In other words, what were some cultural assumptions, which restrained a woman’s freedom to lead in first-century Judaism.

Well, at that time:

- Women were the most oppressed people group
- Women were regarded as being equal to slaves
- As the property of men, they had no rights and no voice
- Women were allowed no formal education
- Women were expected to stay at home
- They were forbidden to speak or show their faces in public
- They were forbidden to read the Torah
- They were relegated to the outer court of the Temple
- Marriages were arranged for them by their fathers
- Men could marry as many women as they liked
- Men could divorce them whenever they chose
- A women’s testimony was inadmissible in a court of law

- And the religious community's attitude to women was even stricter than the Old Testament Law

Jesus' entire ministry provides an amazing example of how to be counter-cultural on this issue. We looked at this some in a prior session, but we'll take some different examples here.

Let's look at three passages and then I'll have an exercise for you. We will look at Luke 7: 36-50, Luke 10: 38-42 and John 4: 1-26.

Luke 7:36-50

36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. **37** A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. **38** As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

41 "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. **45** You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. **46** You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. **47** Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Luke 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39** She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **40** But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, **42** but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

John 4:1-26

1 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— **2** although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. **3** So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. **5** So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" **8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

17 "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. **18** The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

19 "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. **20** Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

21 "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. **22** You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

26 Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

So, the question I have for you is:

In what ways was Jesus approach to women counter-cultural?

Answer the question for each passage in your workbooks for this module. When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

For Luke 7: 36 – 50 others have said:

- Once again, Jesus deliberately confronts the cultural norms of society in his day by questioning Simon's assumptions: that women were inferior; that 'sinners' were outcasts and unworthy of kindness; that this woman, in particular, was 'unclean' and therefore the least of the least; and that it wasn't good to be seen with her let alone eat with or be touched by her.
- Jesus question to Simon "Do you see this woman?" (In verse 44) Does he even look at this woman, acknowledge her or see who she really is? Or does he just see the big label written across her chest, 'Sinner'?
- Despite the labels this woman carries into each day of her life, she has the courage to step out in the dark night and uninvited into the home of a Pharisee: driven by her surrendered heart and pure faith.
- Jesus sees her courage and her heart, her sense of shame and her tears of love. She poured out the very best she had over him. Jesus sees her anguish and also her faith. He returns her love with gentleness and mercy.

- Jesus also uses her as a lesson to Simon in how to really **see** her, to cast aside the label she has been given and to look at the evidence overflowing from her heart.
- Jesus drew a sharp contrast to the way Simon had received him – for all his ‘worldly’ ethical behaviors.

For Luke 10: 38 – 42 others have said:

- Mary was spending her time doing what was forbidden, talking to and learning from a man.
- Martha (In verse 40) would have expected Jesus to reprimand Mary so her protestation indicates how committed she was to her subservient role
- Notice how Jesus defended Mary’s desire to ‘sit at his feet’ and enjoy the insights she was learning from him. He affirmed Mary for that but also wanted Martha to know that he longed for her company too. She didn’t need to put a higher priority on cooking him a meal in obedience with worldly standards. He wanted her to choose what was better for her too – to give herself an opportunity to become familiar with his heart.

For John 4: 1 – 26:

This is a passage, which also demonstrates how Jesus really sees women for who they can be, not for what they have done. His vision for her is based on his conviction that she is fearfully and wonderfully created in God’s image, and in the hope of a future free to live this out. He knows that her life has been a continually confused tale of brokenness and pain. In particular:

- Jesus offers a woman, a Samaritan woman, living water; he treats her as a whole and valued person, not a half-breed
- Jesus establishes her thirst for this eternal life-giving water
- He shows respect for her and values her honesty and self-disclosure
- He recognizes that she is unusually well versed in scripture even though she has had five husbands and now lives with her boyfriend
- Verses 25-26 tell us not just about her knowledge but document Jesus revealing himself personally as the Messiah for the very first time. This Samaritan woman becomes the first evangelist in history!
-

Jesus taught women, healed women, included them in his entourage, encouraged them, and tried to continually point out God’s desire for them to be included and heard. He

serves as an amazing example of how to productively challenge our cultures when their values are not the values of the Kingdom of God.

Unit 8 – How do We Change, and Become Change Agents?

Bringing change is always hard. Even Jesus had difficulty in helping the Jewish establishment to change! As we conclude this module, I want to leave you with some extracts from articles on management about creating an “inclusive culture” where all can work together and grow in their leadership.

- “Both men and women have to be able to envision themselves as leaders, but since this can be harder for women in situations where all the current leaders are men, current leaders have to be intentional about creating the conditions for women to see, explore and observe their full potential”.
- “There is a tendency for powerful men (or women) to sponsor and advocate for other people just like themselves when leadership opportunities arise. They recruit clones of themselves”.
- “Current leaders need to be advocates for others **not** like themselves for diversity to happen”.
- “Men claim and hold a greater number of leadership positions than do women for four reasons: gender bias; women’s lack of experience; women’s lack of motivation and women’s familial responsibility”.
- “Cultural and religious traditions run deep and, by their nature, resist change... in Kuwait, women gained the right to vote and run for office in the 2006 elections but did not win any parliamentary seats.”
- “Political scientists have observed that American women were ‘twice as likely as men to describe themselves as not at all qualified to run for office, even when their credentials were equivalent”.
- “Women are often less likely to promote themselves than men, even when they would be a stronger candidate for a position”.
- Quote: “..as women, we must perform twice as well to be thought half as good”.

- “Leadership teams, in any part of the world, can become very one-sided when dominated by a single gender group or single ethnic group and this makes it almost impossible for others to penetrate and feel they can make a valued contribution”.

Boris Groysberg and Katherine Connolly in their research, present eight best organizational practices for instilling an inclusive culture:

1. Measure diversity and inclusion
2. Hold managers accountable.
3. Support flexible arrangements.
4. Recruit and promote from diverse pools of candidates.
5. Provide leadership education.
6. Sponsor employee resource groups and mentoring programs.
7. Offer quality role models. And,
8. Make the chief diversity officer position count.

As a final application in this module I want you to work on your Personal Leadership Growth Plan. In your workbooks, write down your thoughts on the following questions:

- a. What barriers to men and women being equally engaged in leadership roles in your church or organization do you see? What are some of the underlying contributory factors to this?
- b. What practical steps can and will you take which will enable women to fully exercise their leadership gifts in your church or organization? When will you do these?

When you have completed this exercise, continue to the next module.

Module 8

Exploring Next Steps

Unit 1 – Now, so what?

In this module we are going to take all that we have learned in this course and try to answer the question, “so what?” “What is it God wants me to do about what I’ve learned?” How do I take steps to obey what I believe he might be saying to me.

To begin with, I want to encourage you that you are not alone in this effort to hear from God and obey. Just before the cross, Jesus told the disciples it was for their good that he was leaving them. He promised he would send the Holy Spirit, the **helper**. (John 14) The Holy Spirit had only been **with** them, but Jesus promised he would send the Holy Spirit to dwell **in** them. (John 7) Up to this point, no one could conceive that even Jewish men could become the dwelling place of God, never mind Jewish women and Gentiles.

However, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Both Jewish men **and Jewish women** received Him. (The first believers at Pentecost were Jewish men and women or Jewish converts) In his explanation, Peter refers to the Prophet Joel who said “God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh both men and women”. (Acts 2:17-18). A few years later, **even Gentiles** freely received the Holy Spirit in response to their faith in Jesus. (Acts 10-11) This created a social-cultural revolution!

I want you to turn to your workbooks for this module and answer these questions:

- Identify several racial, social or gender prejudices exist in your culture.
- Do they exist in the church as well?
- What difference could the Church make in discipling your nation if it did not carry those same prejudices?

When you have completed this exercise, click continue.

- As far as identifying racial, social or gender prejudices exist in your culture, others have said:
 - Specific tribal or people group prejudices
 - Specific racial prejudices
 - Seeing a patriarchal culture

Each of our cultures is full of prejudices that grieve God. But He calls his Church to be countercultural and treat each other as brothers and sisters, and submitting to one another with respect and love as the members of the Trinity model for us.

Let's read Acts 2:29-47. Listen carefully for evidence that the Holy Spirit has been poured out and is moving in their midst. What are the signs that you notice?

Acts 2:29-47

29 "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. **30** But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. **32** God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. **33** Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. **34** For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

"The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand

35

until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet."

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." **41** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying

the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

So, evidence that the Holy Spirit was being poured out and moving in their midst was:

- About 3,000 were saved
- They were devoted to the apostle's teaching, fellowship and prayer
- There were wonders and miraculous signs and all the believers were together and had everything in common
- They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts
- And daily there were people being saved

The first fellowships of believers functioned in ways that broke all kinds of social norms. Men and women, Jews and Gentiles, slave and free interacted freely with one another in public settings.

For example, at that time, your social value or class determined where and with whom you ate. You rarely would see women eating with men even in an extended household, or Jews eating with Gentiles or masters eating with slaves. So when the church, (which, remember, included men, women, Jews, Gentiles, masters and slaves) celebrated the "Lords Supper" with a meal as well as the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, it radically broke the social rules of the culture!

Likewise, the early church needed time and discipleship before relationships and roles were aligned to Biblical standards. Paul and the other Biblical writers consistently emphasized throughout their writings that **every member** of the church was to be viewed as one in which God, through the Holy Spirit, dwelt regardless of gender, ethnicity or class.

Let's read Galatians 3:26-29 together as example.

Galatians 3:26-29

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, **27** for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. **28** There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. **29** If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

What do you see here?

- “That there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”
- And if we are part of God’s family, then there should be no difference between us.

God calls his Church to be counter-cultural in our actions and attitudes to one another. This includes graciously disagreeing over scriptural interpretation and continuing to love and respect each other, even if we disagree!

Unit 2 – Case Study: Dr. Aziz Chooses His Priorities

Once again the week passed very quickly for Rebecca. She sat with Elisabeth in church, Dr. Aziz was away teaching at a church across the city. Rebecca wondered during the week what they would talk about on their next visit. She knew that even though a lot of her questions had been answered, she still had a lot more to ask and lot more to learn. She hoped their time would not end so soon.

“Now I have a question for you Rebecca.” Dr. Aziz began. “Where do we go from here?”

“I am not quite sure I understand, Dr. Aziz, what do you mean?”

“Knowing truth is one thing, but living it is quite another. How do you intend to implement what you have learned?”

“The most important thing to me is not that I can now fight my way into some position of leadership, no. But for me I somehow feel validated as a woman. I know God has created me with certain talents and abilities and I want to use them to minister to others. I want to seek ministry not position. If the positions come along then I will gladly step into them and do the best job I can. But primarily I want to encourage and release others to be the men and women God has created them to be, that working together we can make a difference for the Kingdom of God.”

“You have learned the most important thing and I certainly did not teach you that, the Holy Spirit has been at work in your heart, service and ministry come first.”

“However, on a practical note.” Dr. Aziz continued “Let me share a remarkable incident that happened to me several years ago. I was invited to be one of the speakers at the Truth and Reconciliation Committee’s annual conference in Capetown, South Africa. This was when Nelson Mandela was still president. I had a chance to meet him very briefly at a reception and was immensely impressed with the man. A few days later I was invited by a friend to visit Robben Island. This is the island where Mandela and many others were imprisoned. It is located seven miles out in the harbor of Capetown, it took about twenty-five minutes by boat to get there. If I remember correctly, he spent about

eighteen years of his twenty-nine years in prison on Robben Island. The men who lead the tours and drive the buses that take you around the island are all ex-prisoners. So their stories and experiences and commentary were first hand. We were able to visit the actual cell where Mandela was kept. Cell # 5, I believe, first cell on the right at the head of the corridor. The cell was only approximately six feet square, and a small window, high on the wall looked out over the courtyard. At first the cell was completely bare, except for a thin straw mat to sleep on. I was so moved by the experience that when I returned I purchased his autobiography and read it in just a few days. I asked myself, how could a man locked up in a tiny cell on a remote island eventually bring change to a vast and powerful government?"

"The book was fascinating reading and there were many truths that stood out, but one concept seemed to embed itself deep with in my soul and I have not forgotten it. When Mandela and the other black inmates first arrived on the island, they were issued short pants. All the other prisoners were given long pants. The blacks were not given any bread, but the other prisoners received a daily ration of bread. There were several seemingly small, at least to me, injustices. While Mandela was caged in his small cell, he thought, I am out of the big battle, others will have to carry that forward. But I can speak up about the injustices I face every day. I will fight the small battles. He fought for years to get the blacks to be given long trousers, equal food and so on. I have never forgotten that. He fought the small battles that he faced on a daily basis and eventually won the war. Something to think about, my dear."

Rebecca did not respond, but the look on her face told all. She sat in silence. The point had been well taken.

Just then Elisabeth came into the room, Rebecca moved over to make room for her and seemingly wanting to change the subject, said "I almost forgot, next month on the 15th, I have been invited to attend a reception, well actually," she shifted uncomfortably on the sofa and looked a bit embarrassed, "I am to receive a special presentation in recognition of my work at the hospital among the children with AIDS. It is really only a very small gathering, sponsored by one of the charities in town. I know you have a very busy schedule and I certainly understand if you can't make it, but I was wondering if you would attend it with me, it would mean a lot."

Dr. Aziz got up and walked to his desk and looked at his calendar, Elisabeth noticed that he hesitated just a second and asked again about the date.

"The 15th of next month." Rebecca responded.

Again Elisabeth noticed a slight pause, then Dr. Aziz said "Yes of course, Rebecca I think we can make it, it would be an honor."

After Rebecca had left that evening, Elisabeth walked back to Dr. Aziz's office and stood at the door. Dr. Aziz looked up from his reading.

She walked over to him and gently put her hand on his shoulder. "Ishmael are you sure you want to do this. I know how much you were looking forward to being the main speaker at the European Society's annual banquet next month. I think I saw the tickets for Paris arrive the other day in the mail. It would have been the grand achievement of your career, to speak to so many of your colleagues. It really is a great honor. Rebecca would certainly understand."

Dr. Aziz turned slightly in his swivel chair and looked up at Elisabeth. "I am an old man, full of years and honors, probably more than I deserve, now it is time for me to give back. Elisabeth, do you remember how many music recitals, school functions, graduations, how many holidays I missed how many precious days of our children's lives were wasted? I can remember sitting in those lonely hotel rooms all over the world, holding the trophies of success, but feeling so empty inside. Those cold plaques and fading letters of recognition have brought me no warmth or happiness, not like one hug or kiss from one of our children can. And now look at them, they collect dust in a forgotten corner. No I have for too long chased these things that Jesus warned me about, now I believe my heart and treasure are finally in the same place."

Elisabeth gently placed her right hand on Ishmael's shoulder. She bent over and kissed him kindly on the forehead. Without saying a word she turned and walked down the hallway toward the kitchen. A small tear was gleaming on her cheek and a faint smile was on her lips. Rebecca was not the only one learning and growing.

Unit 3 – Using our Talents with Obedience

As we said earlier, this session is about obedience and exploring what God would have us do. How can I best use the talents that I've been given.

Let's read Matthew 25:14-30 and then I'll have a question for you.

Matthew 25:14-30

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. **15** To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. **16** The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. **17** So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. **18** But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. **20** The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22 "The man with two bags of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'

23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24 "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. **25** So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? **27** Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would have received it back with interest.'

28 "'So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. **29** For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. **30** And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

So, the question I have for you is:

What are the principles that you find in this parable that apply to your life today when it comes to being a good steward of your gifts and talents, and/or the gifts and talents of those you lead?

Turn to your workbooks for this module and when you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

So for the question: What are the principles that you find in this parable that apply to your life today when it comes to being a good steward of your gifts and talents, and/or the gifts and talents of those you lead?

Here is what some others have said:

- Every slave is given something
- Faithfulness in the small things is required
- A time of settling accounts will come
- Fear is no excuse

Now, let's take each of these four principles and think about what they mean to us today.

1. Every slave is given something

For us today, the meaning is that "everyone has gifting's". We all have been given gifts from the Lord in different and varied aspects of our lives. We need to, through discernment, try to understand and acknowledge these gifts in our lives. Now before we go any further in looking at these four principles, I want you to reflect on your spiritual gifts and the talents that have been developed in your life.

I want you to go to your workbooks for this module and take a few minutes so you can jot down in there those aspects of your God-shaped character which you have recognized are strengths – either because others have mentioned them or because they feel life-giving to you when you are applying them. What might good stewardship of these gifts look like to you? For example, for some people, engaging in teaching or leading feels instinctive while others would feel stressed in these situations. For some, hospitality comes naturally while for others it creates anxiety. Sit quietly and seek the voice of the Holy Spirit to listen to anything that comes to mind and write it down. You can always pray over this later to discern whether this is God's leading or not. Do this now and click the continue button when you are ready to continue.

Now that we have a bit more understanding of our own spiritual gifts, let's continue on with another principle in the parable of the Talents.

2. Faithfulness in the small things is required.

Remember back to Dr. Aziz's story of Nelson Mandela? What do you think that story was about?

Well, even in prison and unable to fight the entire government, Mandela worked at having the black prisoners receive better clothes and food. Faithfully he fought for these things and won. While the unjust system of being imprisoned kept him from playing a leadership role in the big issues, he still used his strength, skills and gifts to faithfully do what he could.

How could Nelson Mandela's example apply to women in your setting? What about for men in your setting?

Well, people have said:

- Women may not be able to hold positions of leadership in their work or church, but they can faithfully use their gifts of service, etc.
- Men may be limited by education, resources or by ethnicity from holding certain offices or jobs, but they can still use their gifts in their homes, their families, etc.

So, a second thing we learn from the parable of the talents is that faithfulness in the small things is required.

3. A Time of Settling Accounts will come

Why is this an important principle to remember?

Well, because we use all kinds of excuses to keep from using our gifts.

Men and Women try hard to fit a certain cultural norm, but that often means they are not using their gifts and therefore not as productive for the Kingdom. For example, women refusing to take leadership, or men taking leadership, but not feeling equipped.

4. Fear is no Excuse

The slave in the story had real reasons in being afraid to be obedient didn't he? And often we do as well. Christians in many parts of the world face serious persecution. Women in many situations are threatened by violence both at home or in the workplace.

In light of both the imagined fears that we all have and the very real fears that many of us face regularly, let's look at Psalms 27: 1-5.

Psalm 27:1-5

1

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

2

When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

3

Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

4

One thing I ask from the Lord,
this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

5

For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.

I want you to reflect on how this Psalm applies to things you fear in your life. It may be the very real threat of physical persecution for your faith. Or, it may be an equally real fear of doing the wrong thing, or failing. Meditate on this passage for a few minutes and see what God speaks to your heart.

Turn to your workbooks for this module and write down the thoughts that have come to mind. When you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

The phrase in verse 4 “that I may dwell in the house of the Lord...” reminds your author of a book by a Catholic theologian named Henry Nouwen. The book is about the idea that as Christians we spend most of our lives trying to find a way to move from the House of Fear which is the normal way to live in this world, to the House of Love which is what Jesus modeled.

Henri Nouwen writes: "This book is based upon the conviction that love is stronger than fear, though it may often seem that the opposite is true. 'Perfect love casts out all fear' says St. John in his first letter. In this book I hope to search for signs of this perfect love and look for ways to follow those signs. I hope to show the possibility of a spiritual movement: the movement out of the house of fear into the house of love.

But is it possible in the midst of this fear-provoking world to live in the house of love and listen there to the questions raised by the Lord of love? Or are we so accustomed to living in fear that we have become deaf to the voice that says: 'Do not be afraid.' This reassuring voice, which repeats over and over again: 'Do not be afraid, have no fear,' is the voice we most need to hear...."

Now I want you to read the following passages about Peter then look at a couple of questions. Let's read Matthew 26: 69-75, and Acts 2:14-41

Matthew 26:69-75

69 Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said.

70 But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.

71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

72 He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away."

74 Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. **75** Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Acts 2:14-41

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17

"In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

18

Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

19

I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20

The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21

And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. **23** This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. **24** But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. **25** David said about him:

"I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

26

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,

27

because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.

28

You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

29 "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. **30** But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. **32** God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. **33** Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. **34** For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

35

until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet.”

36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” **41** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

So, how do you see Peter moving “from the house of fear to the house of love” after he was filled with the Holy Spirit?

And, what was the fruit in Peter’s life and ministry?

Well, Peter moves from denying Christ out of fear, also sinking when trying to walk on water, failing to stay awake when praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, to a mighty and fearless evangelist, after being filled with the Holy Spirit.

And the fruit of his ministry and life was that over 3,000 were saved.

Isn’t it good to stop and remember that there is nothing we can face that God has not thought of, nothing we fear that Jesus did not face? The one thing we can be sure of is that the source of fear that stops us from using our talents is always Satan. There are no exceptions. If fear is stopping you from using your talents or utilizing the talents of those God has put under your leadership then the only possibility is that you need to move “from the house of fear to the house of love, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Unit 4 – Obedience in God’s strength, not in our own

But how do we obey even when we are afraid? How do we move from the “House of fear to the house of love?”

Let’s read Esther 4:12-17 then answer a question.

Esther 4:12-17

12 When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, **13** he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape.

14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”

15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: **16** “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

17 So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther’s instructions.

So, the question is:

What is Esther’s strategy in approaching this challenge?

Turn to your workbooks for this module and when you have completed this exercise, click the continue button.

So, the question was: What was Esther’s strategy in approaching this challenge?

Some possible answers are:

- Prayer
- Calling many others to pray with and for her
- Fasting
- And leaving the results in God’s hands

God never asks us to do things in our own strength and power. He asks us to do the possible, but let Him do the impossible. In this case with Esther, she was living in a terrible unjust situation where she as a woman had little power. She wasn’t going before

the King to prove anything about herself. Rather she was taking the risk and confronting the powers to save her people as well as herself in this case. She sought counsel, used her mind and spirit to decide what she thought she should do, sought God's intervention and empowerment to do it, then took the risk, trusting God, not herself, or men in power, for the results.

This is what God is asking us to do today. He wants us to model this wonderful combination of using our best efforts within His will, and through His means, to make the most impact possible for His Kingdom.

Now we are coming up on your final assignment. This is an assignment that requires prayer and listening to God. I want you to ask yourself the question, what is God asking me to do that is risky? What is the dream He has placed in my heart? Why am I here at such a time as this? Let's look at this in the next unit.

Unit 5 – What Step of Obedience is God Asking of You?

Obedience is something that God loves. Remember in module 4, when we talked about Jesus' response to a woman in the crowd in Luke 11:27-28?

A woman called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

In Jesus' response, He rejects this destiny-restricting worldview.

"He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it'" (Luke 11:28).

Personal obedience to the word of God is the basis of blessedness—therefore the issue is not, "Are you male or female?" The issue is, "have you been faithful to the call of God upon your life?" The Jewish culture would say that a woman's only value came from having a male child. But Jesus said no—value is based on obedience. This is equally true for both men and for women. For all who obey His word, there is no God-given limit on the God-given destiny.

Obedience is always a choice. Obeying God is a loving response to a loving God. We always have the freedom to choose and that is what makes our obedience to the Father genuine.

Now, turn to your workbooks for this module and answer the following questions, writing down your answers:

What risk is God asking you to take?

What talent or gift have you buried and been unwilling to use?

What lie have you believed that has stopped you from doing what you know God is calling you to do?

What dream has God planted in your heart that you believe He is calling you to do?

Who do you need to support that is trying to take a risk?

Stop and take the time to pray about these questions. Ask God to show you anything that He wants to in this area. Trust Him to do that and take the time to listen.

Now, write down the thing that you believe He is asking you to do. What are the steps He wants you to take to accomplish this thing? Write down any barriers that you are afraid could stop it from taking place.

Once you have completed this exercise, share this with a prayer partner for prayer, fasting, and holding each other accountable to take the steps that are possible and believe God to do the impossible!