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COMMUNITY GROUPS

RIVERS CROSSING CHURCH

Community Group Discussion Guide

May 19, 2024

Women in the Bible Week #4 / Women in the Church

Pastors Paul Taylor and Farrah Taylor

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

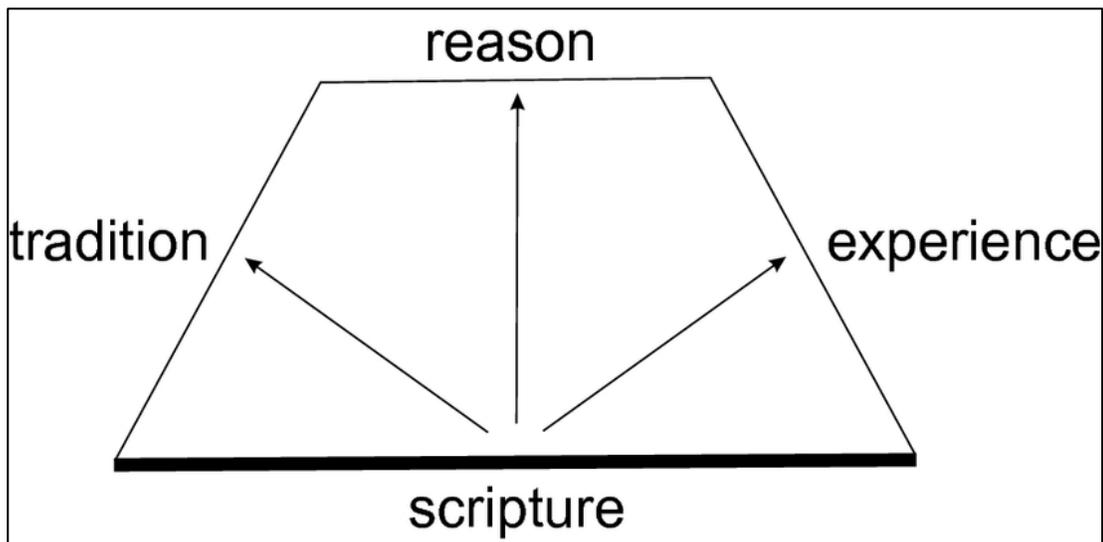
1. Icebreaker Questions | We have two weeks remaining in the 2023-2024 season (Fall, Winter, and Spring) of Community Groups. Reflect on and share about how God has worked in your life, and in the group as a whole, over the past year. How have your relationships with one another grown? What things to do you have to celebrate?
2. Share about your own personal experiences, whether good or bad, with women being chosen, valued, and empowered in the local church. If you're a woman, have you felt empowered or undervalued by the Christian church? Explain.

Have you experienced and/or witnessed the biblical truth that men and women are created by God to be co-heirs with Jesus and co-laborers for God's Kingdom? If so, what did this look like and/or feel like? Is there a specific story that comes to mind?

3. During their sermon, Pastors Paul and Farrah shared the following statement:
"At Rivers Crossing, we believe that women are chosen, valued, and empowered and called to lead with men in fulfilling our mission to give people an opportunity to become fully engaged followers of Jesus. That includes teaching, leading, pastoring, and operating in all the gifts of the Spirit to build the church, under the authority of the Lead Pastor and Elders of the church, which are the only roles that we believe are reserved for men according to the scriptures."
 - a) What are you genuine reactions to this statement?
 - b) Reflecting on this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

DIVING DEEPER

4. As we engage with and discuss various issues of Christian theology, it's helpful to have a framework for evaluating these issues. When describing the core factors that illuminated the Christian faith, theologian and evangelist John Wesley (1703-1791) developed such a framework known as the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral." Reflect on this framework (see below) before discussing the corresponding questions.



- Scripture is considered the primary source and standard for Christian doctrine.
- Tradition is experience and the witness of development and growth of the faith through the past centuries and in many nations and cultures.
- Experience is the individual's understanding and appropriating of the faith in the light of his or her own life.
- Through reason the individual Christian brings to bear on the Christian faith discerning and cogent thought.¹

1. <https://www.umc.org/en/content/glossary-wesleyan-quadrilateral-the>

a) How does Wesley's framework compare to the way(s) in which you evaluate issues of Christian doctrine?

b) How do these four areas – scripture, tradition, reason, and experience – operate to influence your current understanding of women and their role(s) in the church?

5. Jesus, standing out from the culture of His time, not only called women to be His disciples, but also empowered them to be His witnesses. Additionally, the Apostle Paul empowered, affirmed, and called women deacons and leaders, church planters, and teachers, as he wrote to and shepherded the early Christian church.

Read a sample of those passages and discuss the connected questions.

John 20:11-18 (NIV) – ¹¹Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). ¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the

disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Romans 16:1-5 (NLT) – ¹I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. ²Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God's people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me. ³Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. ⁴In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. ⁵Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ.

Women In The Early Church

MARY MAGDALENE

(MATTHEW 27; MARK 15& 16; LUKE 8:1-3, 24:10; JOHN 19:25, 20)

JOANNA

(LUKE 8:1-3)

SUSANNA

(LUKE 8:1-3)

LYDIA

(ACTS 16:11-15,40)

DAMARIS

(ACTS 17)

PHILIP'S DAUGHTERS

(ACTS 21:9)

PHOEBE

(ROMANS 16:1-2)

PRISCILLA

(ROMANS 16:3; ACTS 18:2, 18, 26)

JUNIA

(ROMANS 16:7)

EUODIA

(PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3)

SYNTYCHE

(PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3)

NYMPHA

(COLOSSIANS 4:15)

THE "CHOSEN LADY"

(2 JOHN)

How would you describe the general depiction of women in the early church? Did anything stand out to you from the stories of women shared during the sermon?

6. Pastors Paul and Farrah examined two controversial texts in the New Testament about the role of women in the church – 1 Timothy 2:8-13 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-40. They did so by diving into the context of each passage, both of which involve the nature of orderly worship in a specific local church setting.

1 Timothy 2:8-13 (NLT) – ⁸In every place of worship, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from anger and controversy. ⁹And I want women to be modest in their appearance. They should wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves by the way they fix their hair or by wearing gold or pearls or expensive clothes. ¹⁰For women who claim to be devoted to God should make themselves attractive by the good things they do. ¹¹Women should learn quietly and submissively. ¹²I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. ¹³For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve.

1 Corinthians 14:34-40 (NLT) – ³⁴Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. ³⁵If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings. ³⁶Or do you think God’s word originated with you Corinthians? Are you the only ones to whom it was given? ³⁷If you claim to be a prophet or think you are spiritual, you should recognize that what I am saying is a command from the Lord himself. ³⁸But if you do not recognize this, you yourself will not be recognized. ³⁹So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don’t forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.

a) Did a better understanding the context of these passages change at all your view of women in the church? Why or why not?

b) Is the topic of women in the church, especially women’s leadership roles, one you feel like you need to study further, or is the issue settled in your mind? Explain.

TAKING IT HOME

7. During their sermon, Pastors Paul and Farrah shared that under the New Covenant, all of God’s people – both men and women – are empowered by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of co-laboring with God to accomplish His redemptive mission.

Joel 2:28 (ESV) – And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

Acts 2:1-4 (ESV) – ¹When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:16-18 (ESV) – ¹⁶But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

How can you – whatever your life and vocational circumstances – intentionally act to choose, value, and empower women?

8. Group Prayer | Pray that as a local church body, we can continue operating in a manner that reflects the equality of men and women as God’s image bearers and the harmony of men and women serving together to expand God’s kingdom.

Psalms 133 (NIV) – ¹How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!

²It is like precious oil poured on the head,
running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron’s beard,
down on the collar of his robe.

³It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.
For there the Lord bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

PRAYER REQUESTS

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RIVERS CROSSING - THINGS TO KNOW

1. First Sunday Food Trucks | This summer, don't miss food trucks on the lawn on the first Sunday of the month! Bring your friends and family and join us on the lawn to enjoy community, play games, and purchase food from different local food trucks after service. The fun starts Sunday, June 2nd, and concludes on Sunday, August 4th.
2. Summer Alpha | Alpha is a safe space to explore life's biggest questions and the Christian faith in a friendly, open, and conversational environment. For the Summer, Alpha will meet weekly on Thursday evenings from 6:30pm-8:30pm at Rivers Crossing. Alpha begins on June 6th and concludes August 8th. There will also be a Saturday Alpha experience in late July. Learn more and register below.
<https://riverscrossing.churchcenter.com/people/forms/640444>