

## **Women and Ministry at Hunter Bible Church**

This paper aims to set forth clearly the position of HBC regarding women and ministry. The arguments and conclusions are held in the conviction that these are what the Bible teaches.

We believe that:

### **1. Ministry is for all Christians**

The Bible is consistent in its insistence that all who have genuine faith in Jesus will bear fruit in the form of good works (eg Matthew 3:8-10; Galatians 5:22-26; James 2:14-26). These good works can also be described as ministry (eg 2 Cor 3:1-11) or service (1 Cor 12:5). They are the result of regeneration by the Holy Spirit and are sometimes considered spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1-11). It is the work of Bible teachers of all kinds to prepare God's people for ministry (Eph 4:11-13).

### **2. Ministry is for all Christian women**

Most of the Bible's teaching on ministry and service is directed to both men and women. Therefore, within our church, Christian women can expect to serve in a vast number of ministries such as encouraging, teaching, administration, hospitality, welcoming, music, visiting, praying and training. Moreover, there are some ministries that are particularly important for women, namely the raising of children (1 Tim 5:10, 14) and the teaching and training of other women (Titus 2:3-5).

### **3. Some ministry is only for men**

The Bible also teaches that some ministry is only for men. These ministries are the teaching of the Bible to men and ministries that involve being in authority over men.

Why is this the case?

The Bible sees the church as a family (Gal 6:10) and so therefore principles that govern ministry roles in a marriage or family also apply to the larger gathering of believers.

Within marriages and families the Bible teaches that the husband is in a position of authority (1 Cor 11:2-10; Eph 5:22-24). This involves promoting the Christian maturity of his wife and family through the teaching of God's word (Eph 5:25-33; 6:4; 1 Cor 14:35). Elsewhere this is described as 'managing his own family well' (1 Tim 3:4, 12).

In the church, which is a gathering of individuals, households and families and is itself 'the household of God' (1 Tim 3:15), this ministry of servant leadership extends for some men to include the teaching and leadership of other men (1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Moreover, the Bible expressly prohibits women from the ministries of teaching men or having authority over them. (1 Tim 2:11-15).

For these reasons, Hunter Bible Church will restrict to men ministries that involve significant teaching of men or authority over men.

#### 4. What does this mean in practice?

The Bible provide principles on this question but not a command for every possible situation within a church. Generally, when a ministry involves significant Bible teaching and authority over men it should be performed by men. There are at least four ministries at HBC where this clearly applies.

##### 1. Preaching to mixed congregations

Preaching clearly involves teaching the Bible. Moreover, the preacher is in a position of authority because he is bringing the congregation the authoritative message of the Bible. At HBC, only men will preach to mixed adult congregations.

##### 2. The role of elder

The formal elders of HBC are in a position of authority over other men. They are to teach the church or at least ensure the Bible is taught well to the church. They are also to correct false teaching, enforce church discipline (Titus 1:5-14) and make significant decisions regarding the church (1 Tim 5:17). The elders of HBC will be made up of men only.

##### 3. Leading a mixed Bible Study (growth group)

Bible study leaders or Growth Group leaders are teachers rather than simply discussion facilitators. They are asked to prepare each week's Bible passage and lead people through it so that they might learn and grow. In addition, since they are called to take responsibility for the people in their group, they are necessarily in a position of authority. Therefore at HBC only men will lead mixed Growth Groups.

Most mixed groups will have a female co-leader who can help particularly with leading and teaching the other women in the group.

##### 4. Leading a Sunday meeting

The leaders of our Sunday meetings are required to guide our congregations through things like singing, prayer, Bible reading and the sermon. There will always be a teaching element to this ministry because they will want people to understand *why* we do the things we do. In addition, as they prepare and lead the meeting they need to exercise authority over the congregation and those involved in the running of the meeting. For these reasons, the meeting leaders (MCs) will be male.

#### In summary:

God has called all Christians to serve in a great variety of ways. In his word he has taught that some ministries are to be fulfilled only by men- these being ministries that involve teaching of men and having authority over them.

Hunter Bible Church aims to obey God in this area by following this principle- particularly with ministries of preaching to men, formal eldership, the leading of mixed groups, and service leading.

We are confident that obedience to God's word in this area will contribute significantly to the long term health of our church. Not only will it encourage men to grow as leaders in our church, it will also promote a community where women can thrive in a great variety of God-honouring ministries.