

DIVERSE LEADERS FOR A DIVERSE CHURCH ROMANS 16:1-16

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

M.I. DIVERSE LEADERSHIP IS ONE OF THE SIGNS OF A MATURE CHURCH.

I. WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

WOMEN PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP.

- A. DEACONS (Vs. 1-2)
- B. TEACHERS (Vs. 3-4)
- C. APOSTLES (V. 7)
- D. HARD WORKERS (Vs. 6 & 12)

II. CHURCH IN HOUSES

THE EARLY CHURCH MET IN HOMES. MODERN DAY SMALL GROUPS CAN MEET THIS NEED FOR SPIRITUAL INTIMACY.

- A. IN A TEACHER'S HOUSE (V. 5)
- B. IN FREED SLAVE HOUSES (Vs. 10-11)
- C. IN A FAMILY'S HOUSE (Vs. 14-15)

III. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

HAVING DIVERSITY WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP HELPS TO ENSURE A BALANCED VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSES.

- A. WEALTHY AND POOR
- B. FREE AND SLAVES
- C. LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL
 - 1. LATIN NAMES
 - 2. GREEK NAMES
 - 3. JEWISH NAMES

DIVERSE LEADERS FOR A DIVERSE CHURCH ROMANS 16:1-16

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

If you are like most people even though you have read Romans several times, you probably never stopped to think about these 16 verses. Most of us see a list of names, then let our eyes scan down the page to the last name, and then continue reading.

I think that would be a mistake. Those of you who have attended Devon Church for more than a couple of years have heard me preach through several lists of names. I think there are several things we can learn from this particular list of names. This passage gives us a snapshot of what the early church looked like in Rome.

It seems to me that one of the signs of a healthy church is that its members know what their spiritual gifts are, and are using all their talents, resources, and gifts to promote and advance the Kingdom of God. In other words, a healthy church is a working church.

I think this would be a good time to inform you of a loss in our congregation. I know that you all will be saddened to hear that one of our most valuable members passed away this week – Someone Else. Someone's death has created a vacancy that will be difficult to fill.

Else has been with us for many years, and for every one of those years, Someone did far more than the normal person's share of the work. Whenever leadership was mentioned, this wonderful person was looked to for inspiration as well as results. Someone Else can work with that group. Whenever there was a job to do, a class to teach, or a meeting to attend, one name was on everyone's lips, "Let Someone Else do it." It was common knowledge that Someone Else was among the largest givers in the church. Whenever there was a financial need, everyone just assumed that Someone Else

would make up the difference. Someone Else was a wonderful person, sometimes appearing superhuman, but a person can only do so much.

Were the truth known, everyone expected much too much of Someone Else. Now Someone Else is gone. We wonder what we are going to do. Someone Else left a wonderful example to follow, but who is going to follow it? Who is going to do the things Someone Else did? Someone Else has passed away, God rest her soul.

The fact is we as individuals and as a church have specific purposes to fill as members of the Kingdom of God. We are called to worship, to evangelize, to disciple, to fellowship and minister. And further, God has gifted us to fulfill these purposes as individuals and as a church family. It is time to bury Someone Else. It is time for each of us to step up, identify our spiritual gifts, take inventory of our talents and resources, and put them to work for the Kingdom of God. I would say that as we study through this section of Romans, we can see that: **DIVERSE LEADERSHIP IS ONE OF THE SIGNS OF A MATURE CHURCH.** There should never be a shortage of good leadership in a good church because God the Holy Spirit richly gifts and resources His people to accomplish great things. Therefore, there should never be a time that we lack good leadership and resources to fulfill our purpose as individuals and as a church. Sometimes I think we lack because we have faulty views. Historically we have prevented women from taking leadership positions. We thought that church has to be in a special building. Churches have pretty much been homogenous of the years; homogenous is just a euphemism for segregated. Let's look at the church in Rome as

Paul greets his friends who seem to play prominent roles in church leadership. Let's examine some of these issues.

I. **WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP**
WOMEN PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP.

First of all, it seems relatively clear to me that women in leadership were pretty common. In this section, Paul singles out 10 women for commendation and recognition. Now I know that many of you will find this hard to swallow because of your cultural background or your church background, however, I invite you to read along with me, with an open mind: **WOMEN PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP.**

No doubt many of you will want to direct my attention to I Timothy 2 where Paul says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." That seems pretty clear and straightforward and many churches take that verse and claim that because of it, women cannot be ordained as pastors, they cannot preach, nor can they serve in leadership positions. Now that would be O.K. ... if we didn't have the rest of the Bible. For example this same Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians Church said that there are certain gifts that are foundational to the Church. He lists these leadership gifts as prophets, apostles, teachers, evangelists and pastors. These are the leaders who are responsible to guide and build up the church. With this in mind, let's get back to our passage.

A. **DEACONS (Vs. 1-2)**

In verses 1-2 we meet a woman who holds the office of deacon. Now if you are reading the NIV or the NASB, you may miss this, unless you look at your footnotes, however, the NLT has it right. The NIV and NASB identify Phoebe as a servant. But if

you will look carefully at your footnotes, you will see that the word is actually the same word for deacon. I think it is fairly clear that Paul is referring to this as a title because he adds the clause, “of the church in Cenchrea.” In other words, Phoebe is a deacon in the Cenchrea Church. Cenchrea is a seaport near the city of Corinth. From the sound of it, she is the one who is delivering the letter. Paul further refers to her as a sister in the Lord. He asks the church in Rome to help her out with the business she has to do while in Rome. It seems as if she is a wealthy businesswoman.

Now look at the last phrase in verse 2. The NIV says, “She has been a great help to many people, including me. The word for great help is actually patron or benefactor. She has been a patron, a benefactor to many people, including Paul. However, Paul usually uses this word to mean to direct or to preside over. Phoebe, as a church deacon and giving person, was a blessing to many people, including Paul through her ministry. At any rate, she seems to hold the office of deacon in the Cenchrea Church and she seems to also be rich and powerful, but most of all, she is a godly woman who is good friends with Paul.

B. TEACHERS (Vs. 3-4)

Second, in verses 3-4 we see a powerful woman teacher. Look at the order of names; Priscilla and Aquila are a husband and wife teaching team. In Hebrew tradition and in the Roman world, husbands were almost always listed first, but out of the 6 times this couple is listed in the New Testament, Priscilla is mentioned first, 4 out of the 6 times. That would indicate that she is the lead person on this teaching team. We know that they were originally from Rome and were forced to leave in 49 AD when the Emperor Claudius kicked all the Jews out of Rome. They met Paul in Corinth and

traveled with him to Ephesus, while there, they taught Apollos to be an effective Evangelist. Priscilla seems to have been a gifted teacher. Notice that Priscilla and her husband risk their lives for Paul's sake and for the sake of the gospel.

C. APOSTLES (V. 7)

So we have seen women in the roles of deacon and teacher and in verse 7 we see a woman in the role of apostle. I think this is a good example of how the role of women in culture has influenced our interpretation of Scripture. For almost 1200 years, the church interpreted this second name in verse 7 as feminine. The NLT writes it as feminine. However, between the 13th century and the middle of the 20th century, translators have taken this name and made it masculine. The NIV and NASB translate it as masculine. The feminine form is Junia, the masculine form is Junias. However, most commentators from the second half of the 20th century on to today, almost universally recognize this name as feminine. The feminine Junia is a common name from that period of time. However, the masculine would have to be a contraction of a longer name, Junianus, and the fact is this contracted form is not found anywhere else. Therefore most scholars conclude the name should be the feminine Junia and she is probably the wife of Andronicus. Note, this woman, along with her husband and Paul served jail time for the advancement of the gospel.

Now again, if we read quickly, we may miss this next point. They had the gift of apostle. Note only did they have the gift of apostle they were outstanding in comparison to others who had this gift. Now the gift does not refer to the special calling of the 12 apostles and of Paul. It has to do more with what we would identify as missionaries. They were sent. They were able to pick up at a moment's notice, leave everything

behind, and go to where they were needed. This gift of apostle was closely connected to the gift of evangelism as it is today. Notice I said they were connected, not the same. For example, some people today have this gift of missionary, but not necessarily the gift of evangelism. Hence we have missionary doctors, missionary teachers, missionary pilots, etc.

D. HARD WORKERS (Vs. 6 & 12)

Look at verses 6 and 12. Paul refers to these women as hard workers. Their names are Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis. Now there are two things I want to mention here: First, Paul singles out these 4 women as hard workers. The word for hard work is an extreme word; it means an expenditure of energy to the point of exhaustion. This is interesting, especially in light of the two names found in the first half of verse 12. They are probably twins; their names are Tryphena and Tryphosa, which mean Dainty and Delicate. That is pretty ironic that Dainty and Delicate are singled out for their hard, backbreaking work.

Let me leave this passage to throw one more coal on the fire: In Acts 21, Paul stays at the house of Philip, an evangelist and one of the seven original deacons. Philip has 4 daughters, all of them who have the gift of prophecy.

So we have seen women with the office of deacon and women who possess the leadership gifts of teacher, apostle, and prophet. And further, only women here are commended by Paul as being hard workers.

If you are a person who believes that women should not be in leadership positions, I would encourage you to restudy and rethink that position because here it seems: **WOMEN PLAY A PROMINENT ROLE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP.**

Another misconception many of us have is that we must have a big centralized building to have church. I think that we have forgotten that a building is not the church. An organization or institution is not the church. We do not come to church. We are the church and church is wherever God's people are.

Here we see that the church is meeting in homes: **THE EARLY CHURCH MET IN HOMES. MODERN DAY SMALL GROUPS CAN MEET THIS NEED FOR SPIRITUAL INTIMACY.** As we read through Acts and the rest of the New Testament, it seems as if the church met in several homes and their real spiritual growth came in the context of meeting in small groups.

In verse 5, we see them meeting in a teacher's house. This seems like a natural fit since we have two gifted teachers, Priscilla and Aquila opening up their home for small groups. My guess is that in order to host a small group at your house, you would probably have to have the gift of hospitality as well. Can you imagine how awesome that would be to sit under gifted Bible teachers and learn more about Jesus every day?

My guess is that we have many people with the gift of teaching in our church; however, if we keep them busy doing other things, then we will never get to sit under their gifted teaching. That means something has to happen during this coming year. Starting now, and through 2004, we are going to help everyone find their gifting in ministry and a place to serve, this should free up our gifted teachers to teach. I'm sure the people who sat under Priscilla and Aquila's teachings were blessed. When our gifted teachers are freed up to teach, we will also be greatly blessed.

Do you have to be a great teacher to host a small group? Do you have to have a big, beautiful house? Not at all! You may have the gift of hospitality. In verses 10-11

we see house churches meeting in some freed slaves homes. Aristobulus was a brother of Herod but it is the servants who are hosting the group. Since Paul doesn't address Aristobulus directly, either he is not a believer or he is dead.

That seems to be the case in verse 11 with Narcissus. He was a freed slave who committed suicide. Paul addresses his household, those of which are in the Lord.

And finally, in verses 14-15 we see common everyday families can host small groups. These are just ordinary families who open their houses up to small groups.

I think if we carefully examine the New Testament, we can see three levels of church happening. The first is the large church celebration. In Jerusalem, all the Christians met on Sunday morning at the Jewish Temple courtyard to celebrate as a group. That is what we attempt to do on Sunday mornings. We gather here together, to worship God as a group. Our main objective is not to come here to be fed or gain something for ourselves. We are here to present ourselves as a family before God. We are here to worship Him. We are here to hear from Him. We are here to present ourselves before Him for service, as fit for duty. Our goal on Sunday mornings should not be so much what we can get from the service, our goal should be to thank God for what He is doing, to hear a word from God, and to give back to God; our money, our lives, our service. We should come here every Sunday morning with the expectation that God is going to give us our next week's assignments. We should come each Sunday morning with the attitude of giving ... not getting. That is how we celebrate in a large group.

However, we see that most of the intimate, spiritual growth takes place within the context of the small groups. These groups met together in private homes. They studied

the Bible together; they took communion together, shared with one another and took care of one another. They looked out for one another. If everyone in our church was connected to a small group, no one would ever fall through the cracks. It would be almost impossible not to grow in the context of a small group.

In addition to the large group celebration and the small group experience, people should be involved in one to one discipleship; Paul discipled Timothy, Jesus worked with Peter, James, and John. I believe that rapid growth takes place best in the context of 2 or 3 people meeting together in groups that read the Bible and hold one another accountable.

Now if you are interested in joining a small group, please see Henry. He and his group are in the process of organizing small group ministry. They are also in the process of starting up some of these small, intimate discipleship groups as well. Once again, please contact them if you are interested.

So we need to stop thinking of church in terms of a building or an organization. We are the church and: **THE EARLY CHURCH MET IN HOMES. MODERN DAY SMALL GROUPS CAN MEET THIS NEED FOR SPIRITUAL INTIMACY.**

III. **UNITY IN DIVERSITY
HAVING DIVERSITY WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP HELPS TO ENSURE A
BALANCED VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSES.**

And finally what the early church realized was that we must seek to find unity in diversity. You know society talks about celebrating diversity. For those of you who were here as we studied through the book of Genesis, we came to understand that diversity came as a direct result of human rebellion against God. We as believers don't celebrate diversity; we celebrate the unity we have in the midst of diversity. We come to know and love Jesus from many different backgrounds and cultures. We celebrate the

fact that we have given our lives to Jesus. The diversity adds richness in our understanding of who God is and how He works. But it's not enough to have a multiethnic church; the leadership itself must reflect this multiethnic community: **HAVING DIVERSITY WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP HELPS TO ENSURE A BALANCED VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSES.**

This church in Rome turns out to be a lot like ours. Their church had all sorts of people from all sorts of backgrounds, and as we read through Paul's greetings, we can see that their leadership reflected that as well.

A. WEALTHY AND POOR

First of all, there were both wealthy and poor in the church. As we said before, Phoebe was a wealthy business woman and a deacon in the church. Priscilla and Aquila must have been relatively wealthy to have a house in which they could host a house church.

B. FREE AND SLAVES

On the other hand, we saw that there were slaves in the church as well. Throughout the New Testament, we see the church ministering to the poor. There were also free and slaves. From the names we can see that there were both Roman citizens, freed slaves who had received or bought their freedom and citizenship, and people who were still slaves.

C. LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL

The church was both local and international. Remember, Rome was a cosmopolitan city which had people from all over the world.

1. LATIN NAMES

In this list of Paul's we can see that there were Latin names: Ampliatus, Aquila, Caius, Julia, Junia, Lucius, Quartus, Rufus, Tertius, and Urbanus.

2. GREEK NAMES

There were Greek names: Andronicus, Apelles, Aristobulus, Asyncritus, Epanenetus, Erastus, Hermes, Jason, Narcissus, Nereus, Olympas, Patrobas, Persis, Philologus, Phlegon, Sosipater, Stachys, Timotheos, Tryphaena, and Tryphosa.

3. JEWISH NAMES

There were Hebrew names: Mary and Herodion.

I think this point is critical: Paul commented that in the church no worldly distinctions were legitimate. That in the church there was neither Jew nor Gentile, there is to be no religious distinction. We are Christian. There was to be neither slave nor free. There was to be no economic or social distinction. As Christians, we are all redeemed slaves. We have been freed by Christ. We have been gifted by God's Holy Spirit. There is neither male nor female; as I mentioned before, women and men are gifted and called by God to serve.

Whenever we start to take worldly categories and distinctions, and bring them into the church, we truncate and handicap the ministry of the church. It doesn't matter what race or ethnicity you are. It doesn't matter what your educational background is. It doesn't matter how rich or poor you are. It doesn't matter what gender you are. I can promise you this; if you are a believer in Jesus Christ you have been gifted and empowered by His Holy Spirit. Each one of us has special spiritual gifts. Each one of us has talents and resources given by God. We are commanded and commissioned by God to further His Kingdom by using our gifts, talents and resources to build His church to

unity in love. If you are not serving in the context of church, then you are not only hurting yourself, you are hurting the church.

Now we have talked about this before, but please look at verse 16: I want to repeat this again, let me remind us that not only do we belong to this local church body, we are connected to all Christians around the world. We are one in the Spirit of God. We are one under the Lordship of Jesus. We are one as redeemed children of God our Father. Paul reminds them that all the churches send their greetings to this church in Rome.

And second, please take a moment to look around; do you know everybody's name here? Do you know who they are related to? Do you know their stories? If not, then what's our purpose here? We are called by God to serve Him and to serve one another. If you are not making an attempt to get to know everyone, then I would have to say that we are sinning. I know that must sound a little harsh. However, if we are not ministering to one another, then we are clearly disobeying God and if we don't know one another, it is impossible to minister to one another.

Paul says, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." Some of us come from cultures that greet with a kiss, but in our church it seems that most people bow, shake hands, or hug. Whichever you feel comfortable with, greet one another, get to know one another, minister to one another. Because getting involved with others who are different from us, helps balance our view of the world: **HAVING DIVERSITY WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP HELPS TO ENSURE A BALANCED VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND ITS PURPOSES.**

I'm hoping that we take our calling as Christians seriously. We have been gifted, resourced, and empowered by God to serve: **DIVERSE LEADERSHIP IS ONE OF THE SIGNS OF A MATURE CHURCH** because that means the people of God have identified their gifts and are working.

You know, we chase after all the wrong things in life.

Gordon Dahl said, "Most middle-class Americans tend to worship their work, to work at their play, and to play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair, and their lifestyles resemble a cast of characters in search of a plot."

I hope that's not true of us here at Devon Church. I hope we know our sense of purpose. We have been gifted, resourced, and empowered by God to worship, to evangelize, to fellowship, to disciple, and to minister. Let us never lose our sense of purpose as individuals and as a church.