

care about together because they affect us all – in our family and beyond. Our interest in and care for one another extends to all areas of life: our spouses, marriages and children, our vocational lives, providing for our families, our spiritual growth and discipleship. In order to open to the transforming presence of Christ in all our relationships, particularly our relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to be more intentional about including one another.

Some Christian communities today still hold to a theological position that prevents women from being free to serve God. They argue that the same Apostle Paul encouraged wives to learn quietly in church (1 Cor. 14:34), and at home, to be submissive to their husbands, as unto the Lord (Eph. 5:22). They mention in Paul's other letter, "I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:2). They insist that one of the significant differences in roles is that God made men to lead, provide for, and protect women in a humble and servant-like (i.e., Christ-like) manner. When these gender stereotyping and theological perspectives that limit women are combined, whole congregations can fall into a pattern where women serve refreshments and take care of the children while the men preach and lead. Women are limited in the ways they can serve while men are free to exercise their gifts.

Closely connected with including one another is the commitment to listen to one another with love, respect and genuine interest. In transforming community, none of us have the right to say to another, "I have no need of you" on the basis of gender or any other characteristic. In a transforming community we learn to experience and even enjoy the good chemistry that is produced when male and female get together. We, women and men, are to trust and obey God's words, to worship together, and to help one another as we work what God wants us to do together in the name of Jesus Christ.

April 8, 2018
Life Together in Christ (4)
Men and Women in Community
Luke 24:22-23
Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

As you may know, Korean culture is deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy and thought. During Korean traditional holidays, especially New Year's Day and Full Moon Harvest Day, many Korean families conduct ancestor worship at home, involving women to prepare a lot of food for it. But women are excluded in the ancestor worship. In Korean Confucian culture, women were excluded and exploited on main occasions. When boys and girls became the age of 7, they were supposed to be segregated in public places. When American missionaries came to Korea and started a church, they realized that Korean men and women didn't want to be in the same place during the worship service. So they divided them by a curtain or panels. Today Korean society becomes more open to women, but there is still Confucian influence in many aspects in Korean lives.

Jewish culture of Jesus' time was almost the same as the Korean Confucian culture. In the synagogues men and women were separated by a curtain. Women and girls were not taught the Torah. They served quietly in the background as men discussed and argued about spiritual matters. Women were not allowed to speak or ask questions in public gatherings. Therefore, the way the men and women were together in community around Jesus was fairly radical.

The various Gospel accounts record the fact that women were the last ones to linger around the cross and the first to arrive at the tomb where Jesus was buried. The fact that Jesus appeared first to women at the tomb was quite out of the ordinary. Jesus appeared to them at the tomb and interacted with them personally on that resurrection morning, charging them with announcing the good news to the other disciples. That was unusual.

The names of the women are recorded slightly different in each account. But all four of the Gospels state that these ordinary women were part of the transforming community that followed Jesus closely. They were deeply involved with him both in his life and in the pivotal moments surrounding his death, burial and resurrection.

One of the most significant signs of Jesus' presence was a transformation in relationships between men and women. God's original and best plan was a partnership model in which man and woman together would fully reflect the image of God. When God brought Eve to Adam, Adam couldn't help exclaiming, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken!" (Genesis 2:23) He recognized her immediately as a kindred spirit, capable of being the partner and companion.

When the disciples returned to Jerusalem to await the Holy Spirit, they were all together in the upper room. Acts 1:14 says, "*all these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.*" On the day of Pentecost they were still together as tongues of fire rested on each one of them and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and were speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4). I think many of those who spoke in tongues were women.

Have you ever experienced or witnessed speaking in tongues? When I was a youth and a young adult, our church held revival meetings two times a year. In addition to that, my pastor encouraged us to participate in a special summer revival gathering at a retreat center. Most of the speakers were charismatic, emphasizing to fully receive the Holy Spirit. And a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit was speaking in tongues. I prayed a lot and prayed hard to speak in tongues, but it was in vain. During prayer time, I observed that more than two-thirds of those who spoke in tongues were women. I realized that women have more spiritual sensitivity and are devoted to the word of God.

In Galatians 3:26-28 Paul summed up the impact of Jesus' redeeming presence in the new community: "*In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*" All of this is to say that oneness, equality and mutuality across lines of race, socioeconomic status and gender are significant aspects of a transforming community. In communities gathered around the transforming presence of Jesus, women and men of different races, ethnic groupings and income levels experience equal opportunities and invitations to serve, lead and participate in the life of the community. Many churches and ministry communities today are still in the process of discovering what the oneness he taught and modeled really looks like – especially across lines of gender.

It is my joy and honor to serve Faith Church as a pastor. As you know, our church is a unique congregation which has diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. We are from different countries and different faith backgrounds. Some of you have a Roman Catholic background or Buddhist background or Shamanist background or EUB background or MEC background or Filipino Methodist background or Korean Methodist background. But we are one and we are of the same mind in worship and ministry. This is awesome! I hope our church will be more a diverse and intergenerational congregation and continue to do great things for God's kingdom.

Paul uses the metaphor of the family to characterize our relationship to one another in the community of Jesus. He speaks of us as the family of God and men and women as brothers and sisters in that family. This metaphor speaks deeply about the love and intimacy, equality and mutuality in relationships between men and women in the body of Christ.

Because of our love and care for each other, there are no "men's issues" or "women's issues." There are just human issues that we