

Women of the New Testament

Day 1: The Women in Jesus' Life & Ministry

Matthew 1 - The Genealogy of Jesus

1. List the women mentioned in the first chapter of the New Testament. Matthew 1:3, 5, 6, 16.
2. Why do you think any women were mentioned?

Optional Digging Deeper:

You can find these women's stories here:

- Genesis 38
- Joshua 2, 6:22-23
- The book of Ruth
- 2 Samuel 11-12, 1 Kings 1
- Matthew 1, Luke 1-2

Luke 8:1-3 - The Women who Followed Jesus

3. What are the names of the women who followed Jesus?

For Your Information:

"Rabbis of Jesus' day did not have women disciples, so this was unusual."

- *NLV Study Bible*

"Why does Luke specifically mention the women who followed and served Jesus? Because in that day, Rabbis generally refused to teach women and almost always gave them an inferior place -but not Jesus."

- *David Guzik, Commentary on Luke 8*

4. What was their contribution to the traveling group? 8:3

For Your Information:

"We must not imagine women, especially poor women, tucked away in their homes, secluded from economic activity. Inscriptions, epitaphs, and visual art all suggest the active presence of women in the economy of the ancient world."

- *Lynn H. Cohick "Women in the World of the Earliest Christians" 2009*

5. How many men went along with Jesus?
6. Why do you think Luke found it necessary to include mention of these women?

Underline Jesus' response to some women in the New Testament:

"Dear woman,' Jesus said to her, your faith is great. Your request is granted.' And her daughter was instantly healed." *Matthew 15:28*

"Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.'" *Mark 5:33-34*

"The young man who had died was a widow's only son, and a large crowd from the village was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. 'Don't cry!' he said. Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. 'Young man,' he said, 'I tell you, get up.' Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother." *Luke 7:12-15*

"He saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said 'Dear woman, you are healed of your sickness.' Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight. How she praised God!...'This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years. Isn't it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?'" *Luke 13:11-13, 16*

"Teacher,' they said to Jesus, 'this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?'...They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"... Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, 'Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?' 'No, Lord,' she said. And Jesus said, 'Neither do I. Go and sin no more.'" *John 8:4-5, 10-11*

7. What is the tone of these passages? What words come to mind to describe Jesus' interaction with these women?

Applying the Word: *In light of Jesus' interaction with these women, how do you view him interacting with you now? What kind of relationship do these passages imply Jesus wants with you?*

Day 2: The Women who Chose Jesus

Luke 10:38-42 - Mary & Martha

1. Write down your initial reactions to this passage.
2. What do you believe was the cause of Martha's frustration with her sister?
3. Where is Mary? What is she doing? 10:39

Optional Digging Deeper:

Take a look at another of Mary's rebellious displays of love to Jesus. John 12:1-11

For Your Information:

"Mary...sat at the Lord's feet" in the position of a disciple. Rabbis did not usually have female disciples.

- *NLT Study Bible*

4. Which woman do you think was fulfilling the typical gender role of the time?
5. What do you think are the implications of Jesus statement in verse 42 for *all* women?

John 4:6-30 - The Woman at the Well

6. Why is the woman surprised when Jesus talks to her? 4:9

Optional Digging Deeper:

Note the differences in Luke 3:1-19: Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and Luke 4:10-26: Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman.

By tradition, a rabbi would not speak with a woman in public, even his own wife. It was also very unusual for a Jewish person of that time to ask a favor or accept a drink from a Samaritan's cup. Jesus' request genuinely surprised the woman.

- *David Guzik, Commentary on John 4*

7. What illustration does Jesus use to explain to her what he's offering? 4:10

8. Why do you think Jesus pointed out the promiscuity in her life and in her past? (6:16-19) How does she answer his questions?

9. What does Jesus reveal to her? 4:26

10. How does she react to what he's said? 4:28-29

For Your Information:

"This woman is sometimes called the "first evangelist" in the New Testament. She is, of course, a woman ... hardly what you would expect of a respected news-bringer. A woman's word in the first century counted for little; they were not even allowed to offer testimony in a court of law. She is also a Samaritan, a people hated by the Jews of Jesus' time. The Samaritans were once Israelites, but they became polluted by intermarriage with other nations (primarily the conquering Assyrians) and thus were considered half-breeds."

- Lee Harmon, www.dubiousdisciple.com

Applying the Word: *Which woman do you identify with most, Mary, Martha or the Women at the Well? Imagine Jesus came to you now: What would he find you doing, and how would he be received?*

Day 4: The Women at Jesus' Death & Resurrection

Matthew 27:55-56: The Crucifixion

1. Where were the disciples at this time? (Matthew 26:56)

For Your Information:

"To their everlasting honour, these women evidenced more courage, and affectionate attachment to their Lord and Master, than the disciples did, who had promised to die with him rather than forsake him."

- Adam Clarke

2. Why had the women come from Galilee? 27:55
3. What were they doing? 27:55 (Read 27:38-54 to understand what they saw).

It's All Greek to Me:

"The word "watching" in Greek is the word *theoreo*, which means to be a spectator of, to discern, to literally or figuratively experience, or intensively acknowledge. They watched with discernment."

- Linda Crawford, "The Women who Watched"

4. Read Mark 16:1-2. What did they do next? Why?

Luke 24:1-11: The Tomb

8. Who are the first people to the tomb of Jesus? 24:10
9. What do the women realize? 24:8
10. What do they do with the news (24:9)? Write down some words to describe the emotions and thoughts they might have been feeling and thinking.
11. How do the disciples react to the women? 24:11

For Your Information

“Women were the first to find the tomb empty and to hear the announcement of the resurrection. This is strong evidence for the historicity of the accounts. In first century Judaism, women were not regarded as reliable witnesses, so the church would never have created stories in which women discovered the empty tomb.”

- *NLT Study Bible*

John 20:11-18: The Resurrection

12. What had Mary discovered earlier? (John 20:1-2)

13. Why has she returned to the tomb? Why is she crying? 20:13

14. What had Jesus done for her? (Luke 8:2)

15. What does Jesus say that makes her finally realize who he is? What is her first response? 20:16

16. What is unique about Jesus appearing to her? (Mark 16:9)

For Your Information:

Mary was the first eyewitness to see the Lord following his resurrection. She not only saw him, she heard him and touched him. This great privilege was given to a woman whose broken life had experienced healing. In Jewish culture, this was astounding.”

- *NLT Study Bible*

“Hence the superiority of the women in constancy to Christ, through trials under which the zeal of apostles fainted. They loved more. This is seen in their pious regard for the lifeless body of the Master, and the rich reward of their fidelity on the morning of his resurrection.”

- *George W. Bethune*

Applying the Word: What feelings and emotions compelled these women to remain faithful to Jesus', even in light of his death? What helps you maintain faithful to Jesus in the most difficult times? Think of how he rewarded their faithfulness? How do you think he wants to reward yours?

Day 4: The Women in the Early Church

Acts 16:13-15 - Lydia

1. Why did Paul go to Macedonia? Acts 16:9-10.

2. Who is his very first convert there? 16:14

3. Where is she from? What does she do for a living? 16:14

Anyone who was a seller of purple dealt in a valued, luxurious product. The dyes used for making purple were expensive and highly regarded.

- David Guzik

4. What does she do after God opens her heart? 16:15

I bet it never entered into Lydia's heart, when she left Thyatira with her purple bales, that she was going to find Jesus Christ over at Philippi; neither did Paul guess, when he saw, in a vision, a man of Macedonia, and heard him say, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us," that the first person he would have to help would not be a man of Macedonia at all, but a woman of Thyatira and that the congregation he should preach to would be just a handful of women gathered by the side of the little stream that runs through Philippi.

- Charles Spurgeon

Acts 18:1-3 – Priscilla

5. Who does Paul meet in Corinth? 8:2

6. What kind of relationship does he form with them? 8:3

7. Underline the actions surrounding Priscilla and Aquila in the following verses and write down a word or two to describe their role.

“Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John’s baptism. When

Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.” *Acts 18:24-26*

“The churches here in the province of Asia send greetings in the Lord, as do Aquila and Priscilla and all the others who gather in their home for church meetings.” *1 Corinthians 16:19*

“Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and those living in the household of Onesiphorus.” *2 Timothy 4:19*

“Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches. Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.” *Romans 16:3-5*

“Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea... Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.” *Acts 18:18*

8. Go back and circle the name of who was mentioned first. Why do you think Priscilla gets mentioned first so many times?

For Your Information:

“Significantly their names only ever appear together which suggests they were a team. They were partners in ministry. Indeed Paul commends Aquila and Priscilla as his “fellow workers” who risked their lives for him. Even more significantly, in four of the five places where their names appear together, Priscilla is mentioned first.”

- *Stephen Sizer*

“Both Acts and the Pauline tradition refer to the missionary couple Priscilla and Aquila, with Priscilla's name preceding her husband's in four of six instances (Acts 18:18, 26; Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19). Since the husband's name usually figures first in ancient pairings, this pattern suggests Prisca's prominence.”

- *Greg Carey, “The Power and Presence of Women In The Earliest Churches”*

Romans 16:1-2 – Phoebe

9. List the words and phrases used to describe Phoebe. Romans 16:1-2.

Optional Digging Deeper:

Paul mentions ten women in Romans chapter 16. Can you find them all?

It's all Greek to Me:

The word *deacon*, in Greek *diakonos*, is used to describe those who “taught, preached, rendered a variety of spiritual services to newly formed Christian communities and possessed an ample amount of authority and leadership status within such communities.”

- *Elizabeth A. Castelli “Paul on Women & Gender” 1999*

“Bible **translators** have a habit of translating the ancient Greek word *diakonon* as “deacon” when it speaks of men and “servant” when it speaks of women.”

- David Guzik

For Your Information:

“Phoebe was on her way to Rome (probably entrusted with this precious letter) and Paul sends an advance recommendation of this sister in Christ so the Romans will receive her and support her during her stay in Rome.”

- David Guzik

“The only named deacon in the New Testament is Phoebe, a patron of the movement -- she seems to be Paul's representative to the church in Rome (Romans 16:1-2).

- Greg Carey, *“The Power and Presence of Women In The Earliest Churches”*

Romans 16:7 - Junia (Junias NIV)

11. What does Paul say about Adronicus & Junia?

It's all Greek to Me:

“**Among**” - translated "among" 97 other times in the NT. Matthew 20:26 "to be great among you" uses the same word. Expresses the idea of being within a group.

“**Apostles**” - These were not of the 12, but apostle (meaning one who is sent) remained a spiritual gift, 1 Cor 12:28, and we have biblical proof that others became known as apostles as they received this spiritual gift or calling. (Paul and Barnabas were apostles, Col.1:1, Acts 14:3,4.; also Silvanus and Timothy, read both 1 Thes 1:1, and 2:6).

- Dianne D. McDonnell

For Your Information:

Paul also refers to Junia as an apostle, a fact most English translations covered up until 1989 (Romans 16:7).”

- Greg Carey, *“The Power and Presence of Women In The Earliest Churches”*

Since Junia was given this highest spiritual gift along with her husband Andronicus, it is obvious that women can also be given the calling (spiritual gift) of serving God as a prophet, teacher, or any of the other spiritual gifts. In the scriptures that explain spiritual gifts there is no indication that any gift is limited to males only. Both men and women are to work together using whatever talents, abilities and spiritual gifts they have been given by God to serve, in a servant manner, the people of God.

- Dianne D. McDonnell

Applying the Word: We know very little about these women from the early church as we are only given a sentence or two about each of them. What sentence summarizing your life and faith would you want to be remembered by?