

8 The Samaritan Woman evangelized.

Jesus not only broke with cultural tradition by speaking to a Samaritan woman alone, he also revealed to her that he was the Messiah. She in her faith left her normal tasks, evangelized and caused many people in her town to believe and to be brought to Jesus. (John 4)

9 The women disciples of Jesus were called ministers.

All leaders in the New Testament are called to servant leadership. The Greek root word is “diakonon” (from where we transliterate, “Deacon”.) This word is translated, “Minister” or “Servant”. This is the word that is used to describe Paul, Timothy, Barnabus and Apollos. (Acts 12:25, Acts 19:22, 1 Thess. 3:2, 1 Cor. 3:5) The women who ministered to Jesus are also called “diakonon”. These are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and of Joses, and Salome. (Mark 15:41, Matt 27:55)

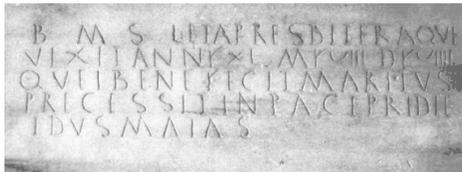
10 The women are chosen by God to bear the news of the resurrection to the rest of the disciples.



In a society where women are not even deemed as reliable witnesses in court, the resurrected Jesus chooses women to be the first witnesses to the most important and definitive event in history. This place of honor is then expanded by Jesus sending the women out with a message to the rest of the disciples. Since the definition of an apostle is “one who is sent” the women become the first apostles bearing the good news that Jesus has even conquered death. (Matt. 28: 1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-11, John 20:1-18) Seeing the resurrected Jesus later becomes one of the criterion for being an apostle. (1 Cor. 9:1)

11 Junia is called a prominent apostle.

Junia is praised by Paul as being one of his “kindred” and as a “fellow captive”. Since preaching the good news was the crime for which apostles were imprisoned, this activity would make her a kindred spirit of Paul’s. Since Paul also goes on to describe her as being “prominent among the apostles”, or well known for her activities, this lends credence to her proficiency in highest profile activity of apostles; the preaching of the good news. She is also said to have been “in Christ” before Paul. (Romans 16:7)



5th
Century
Tomb
Epitaph

“Sacred to her good memory.
Leta the Presbyter lived 40 years 8 months, 9
days, for whom her husband set up this tomb.”

12 Pheobe is the minister and leader of the Church in Cenchrea.

Pheobe was the minister and leader of the Church in Cenchrea. She is also the only person who is named as a Saint by Paul. (Saint is “agion”, from the Greek root word of holy.) She is sent by Paul to carry the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. 16:27) and to put it into action, “Assist her in whatever she may have need of you”. (This is parallel to the role of Timothy in 1 Cor. 4:17.) She is also called a “Prostasis”; a ruler or leader. The root of this word is used in Acts 10:33, as “Prostasso” and is translated, “Command”. As a Prostasis, she is described as a “Leader of many” and even as a leader of Paul himself! This is probably a reference to Paul’s visit to Cenchrea in Acts 18:18, where he makes a vow and shaves his head. No male leadership is ever associated with Cenchrea, only Pheobe. (Rom. 16:1-2)

Resources on women in Church leadership:

Boomsma, Clarence. *Male and Female One in Christ: New Testament Teaching on Women in Office*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993.

Fiorenza, Elizabeth Schüssler. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. Second Edition. London: SCM Press, 1995.

Grenz, Stanely and Kjesbo, Denise Muir. *A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1995.

Irvin, Dorothy. “The ministry of women in the early church : the archaeological evidence”, *Duke Divinity School Review*. 45. 2 (1980), 76-86.

Kroeger, Richard and Catherine. *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 In Light of Ancient Evidence*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1992.

Christians for Biblical Equality Statement:
<http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/men-women-and-biblical-equality>

A scriptural argument for equality of the sexes.



FRACTIO PANIS. section II (detail). Cappella Greca. In the Catacomb of Priscilla –Rome.

This 2nd century fresco on an arch over an altar in a small underground tomb chapel depicts women celebrating the Eucharist together. Dorothy Irving argues that the slope of the shoulders, breasts and the hair-styles indicate that this is a portrait of women.

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TWELVE SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

1 Miriam was a leader of the Children of Israel.

Miriam is named as a leader alongside Moses and Aaron. (Mic. 6:4, 1 Chr. 6:3, Num. 12) She and her mother Jachobed are also the only women named among the male priests of their tribe. (Num. 26:59)

A fourth-century tombstone that records the burial of 'Guilia Runa, woman priest'.



2 Deborah gave God's instructions to Barak and the army.

Deborah the judge said, "The Lord, the God of Israel commands you..." As the mouthpiece of God, Barak would not go to battle without her. She also correctly prophesied, "God will give Sisera into the hand of a woman." (Judges 4)

3

Hulda the prophetess was chosen by King Josiah to identify a scroll instead of Jeremiah or Zephaniah. (2 King 22:8-23, 2 Chr. 34:14-28)

Hulda's proclamation, "Thus saith the Lord" proclaims her connection to God. Her calling the people to repentance and obedience began a great revival in Israel. (2 Ks 23:4-27, 2 Chr. 34:29-35:19)



4

Anna was a New Testament prophetess in the temple in Jerusalem.

Anna proclaimed Christ's birth, "To all who are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem". Her life had been spent in service to God. (Luke 2:36-38)

5

Mary the Mother of Jesus was called by God to go against religious law and culture.

Becoming pregnant before marriage would invalidate Mary's betrothal and would isolate her from her religious and social community. Nevertheless, Mary was obedient to God's call and sacrificed her own plans. (Luke 1)

Mosaic of Bishop Theodora (820 AD) in a side chapel in St. Praxedis Church, Rome. Note the title "EPISCOPA" over Theodora's head.



6

The Bible describes the outpouring of spiritual gifts to women.

Joel 2:28-29

And it shall come to pass afterward, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

7

Women were disciples of Jesus. They were not sent back to domestic duties.

When Martha of Bethany complained that her sister Mary was not helping with the culturally appropriate household duties, but sitting at Jesus' feet as a disciple and listening, Jesus responded that Mary has made a "good choice, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42) Tabitha is also named as a disciple, "Full of good works and acts of charity." (Acts 9:36-41)