

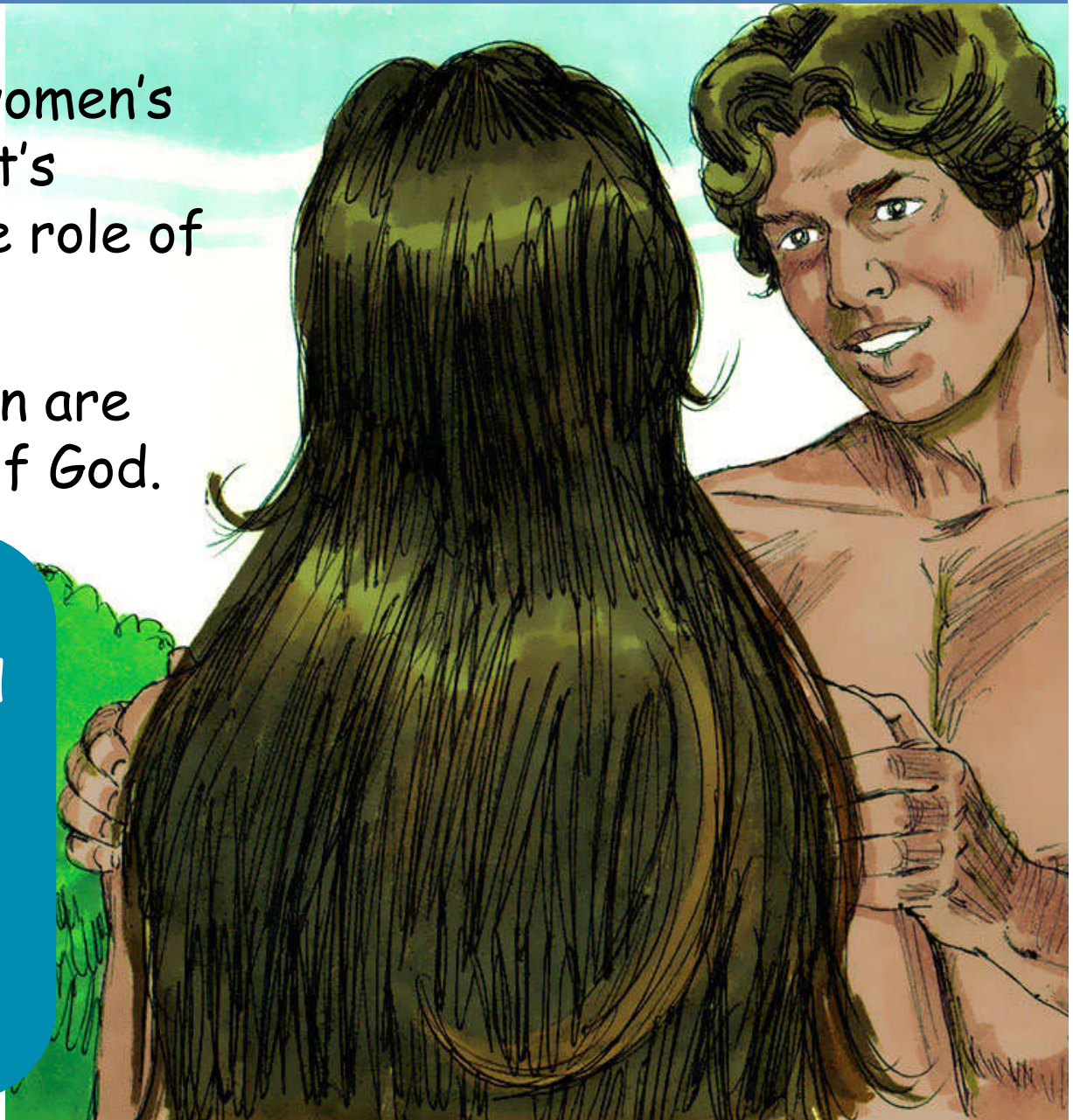


THE ROLE OF WOMEN

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

- ❑ Before we look at women's place in ministry, let's briefly consider the role of women in general.
- ❑ Both men and women are made in the image of God.

Gen 1:27 (NIV) So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.



THE ROLE OF WOMEN



Gen 1:28 (NIV) God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

- They are jointly commissioned to fill the earth and rule over creation. Aside from the obvious fact that women will bear the children and feed them in the initial phase, there is no evidence of role differentiation in this. We are commissioned to rule together over creation.¹

¹ <https://nzchristiannetwork.org.nz/should-women-lead-churches-and-preach>

SUBMISSION

- ❑ What of the instruction in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord"?
 1. A wife needs to submit to one man (her husband), not to every man.
 2. A wife willingly submits to her husband because she loves Christ.
 3. The fact that she submits to her own husband does not suggest that she is inferior in any way. Trinitarian doctrine holds that Christ is equally God, yet he constantly submitted himself to the will of the Father (John 5:30; Luke 22:42). ¹

¹ John 5:30 (NIV) "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because **I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.**"

Luke 22:42 (NIV) "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet **not my will, but yours be done.**"

SUBMISSION

4. God also requires submission of citizens to government, congregation to church leaders, and children to parents. None of these imply the inferiority of those who submit.
5. Submission does not equate to authoritarian domination
 - Matthew Henry (1662-1714) was a nonconformist Puritan minister in England best known for the six-volume biblical commentary. He wrote "The woman was made out of Adam's side. She was not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved."

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

- ❑ According to the A/G US Position Paper on "The Role of Women in Ministry":
 - Genesis 2:18-25 Some expositors have taught that all women should be subordinate to adult men because Eve was created after Adam to be his "helper" (NIV; "help meet", KJV). Yet the word ezer ("helper") is never used in the Hebrew Bible with a subordinate meaning. **Seventeen out of the twenty times it is used, it refers to God as the helper.** Eve was created to be a help (kenegdo) "suitable" or "corresponding to" Adam, not a subordinate.¹

¹ <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/The-Role-of-Women-in-Ministry>

WOMEN IN THE OT

- ❑ People who were normally marginalised (women, foreigners, menial labourers and servants) were included by God in the Old Covenant:
 - Deut 29:10-12 (ESV) "You are standing today, all of you, before the LORD your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your **little ones**, your **wives**, and the **sojourner** who is in your camp, from **the one who chops your wood** to **the one who draws your water**, so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God is making with you today..."

WOMEN IN THE OT

❑ Women were instructed to be present for the public reading of the Scriptures on the Feast of Tabernacles.

➤ Deut 31:12 (NIV) Assemble the people--men, **women**

and **children**, and the **foreigners** residing in your towns--so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law.



THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN

- ❑ The fifth commandment in the Law (to honour parents) does not make any distinction in the honour to be shown between one parent and another.
- ❑ In the New Testament, Paul explicitly instructs children to "Honour your father and mother" (Ephesians 6:2).
- ❑ Solomon instructs his son, "do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Prov 1:8, 6:20).
- ❑ God's love for us is compared to a mother's love (Isaiah 49:15). Likewise Paul compares their concern for the Thessalonian believers to a mother's love.
 - 1 Thess 2:7 (ESV) But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN

- ❑ Many women in ancient cultures (including children and adolescents) were forced into prostitution. **Most codes of law allowed prostitution, with the Hebrew scriptures being the only one that condemned the practice.**
- ❑ According to Herodotus, "The most shameful custom among the Babylonians is this, that every native woman must once in her life prostitute herself to a stranger in the temple of Venus". ¹
- ❑ In Greece slaves were required to work as prostitutes and had no right to decline. In India the initiation rituals of devdasi of pre-pubescent girls included a deflowering ceremony which gave priests the right to have intercourse with every girl in the temple. ²

¹ Book I, ch. 187 ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Bible

THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN

- ❑ Prostitutes had a role in several ancient Roman religious observances, mainly in the month of April. On April 1, women honoured Fortuna Virilis, "Masculine Luck", on the day of the Veneralia, a festival of Venus. On April 23, prostitutes made offerings at the Temple of Venus Erycina, a goddess associated with prostitutes.¹
- ❑ Eusebius noted that the first Christian Roman emperor Constantine closed down a number of temples to Venus or similar deities in the 4th century AD. Eusebius also records that the Phoenician cities of Aphaca and Heliopolis (Baalbek) continued to practise temple prostitution until Constantine put an end to the rite.²

¹ Life of Constantine, 3.55 and 3.58

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_in_ancient_Rome

WOMEN IN THE OT

- ❑ There are many notable godly women in OT times, including:

Eve, "the mother of all living", who despite being deceived by Satan, would later always express gratitude to God for her children (Gen 4:1-2,25).

Hagar, whose cries for help in the desert were heard by God, who delivered her and her son Ishmael.



WOMEN IN THE OT



Sarah

The wives of the patriarchs like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah are all strong prominent women. On one occasion God instructs Abraham to listen to his wife (Gen 32:23).



Rebekah



Rachel

WOMEN IN THE OT



The righteous Egyptian midwives who risk Pharaoh's anger by defying his instruction to kill the Hebrew baby boys.

Yocheved (Jochebed) who hid her son Moses so that he could escape death.



WOMEN IN THE OT



Miriam who
cared for her
brother Moses.

She cleverly arranged
for his own mother to
become his nursemaid.



WOMEN IN THE OT



Thermuthis

Pharaoh's daughter (called Thermuthis by Josephus), who "took pity on" Moses and adopted him, saving him from execution by her father.

Rahab, who assists the Israelites in the conquest of Jericho and saves her family from destruction.



Rahab

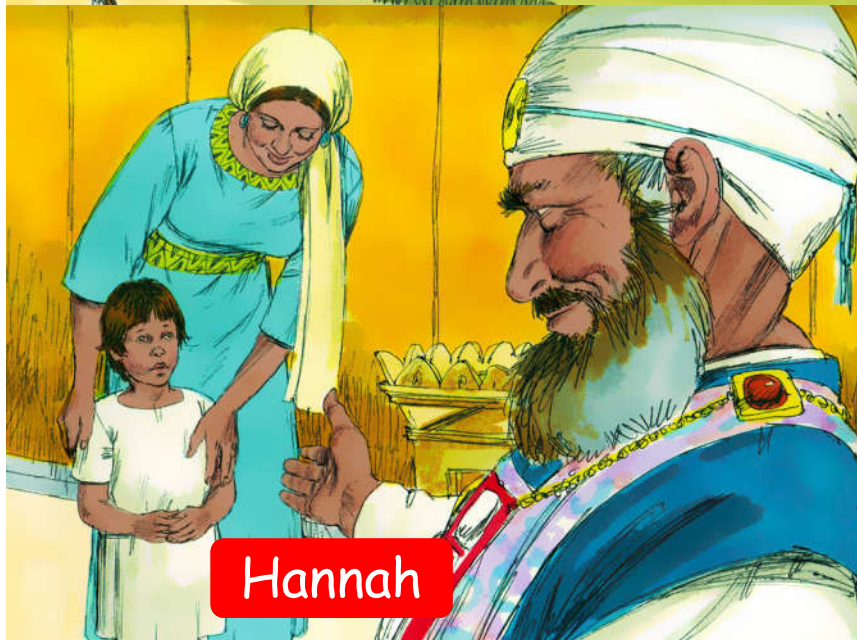
WOMEN IN THE OT



Jael

Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, the five daughters of Zelophehad who fought and won the right for daughters to inherit property (Num 27).

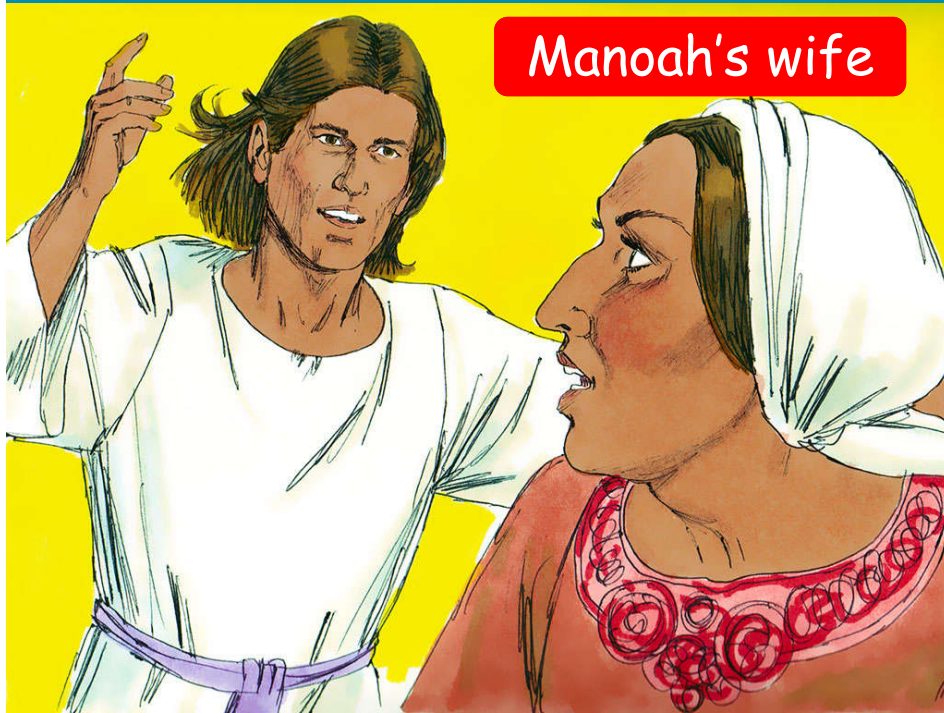
Deborah who rules Israel and Jael who helps deliver the Israelites from Sisera and the Canaanites.



Hannah

Hannah who intercedes to God for a child and then dedicates the boy Samuel to God's work.

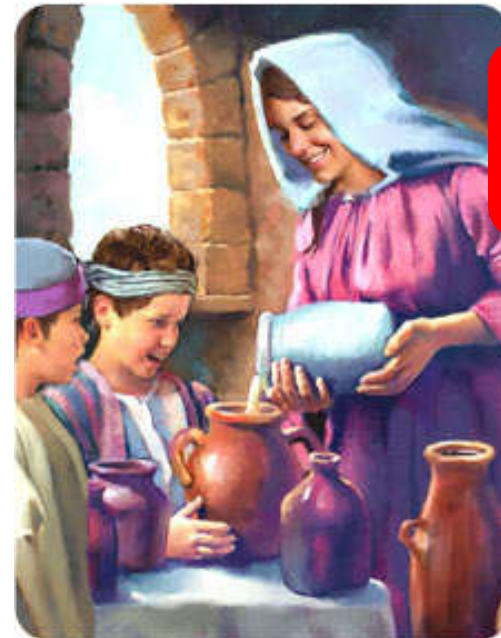
WOMEN IN THE OT



Manoah's wife

The barren wife of Manoah who had an angel appear to her and foretell that she would bear a child (Samson) who would deliver Israel from the Philistines.

The widow of the prophet who was assisted by Elisha to pay her creditors with the miracle of the oil that multiplied (2 Ki 3).

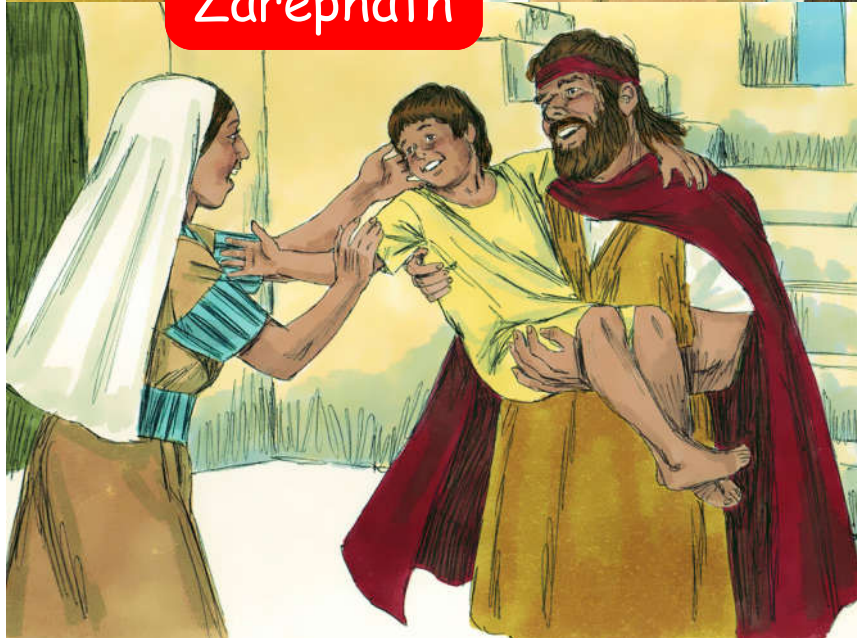


The prophet's widow

WOMEN IN THE OT



Widow at
Zarephath



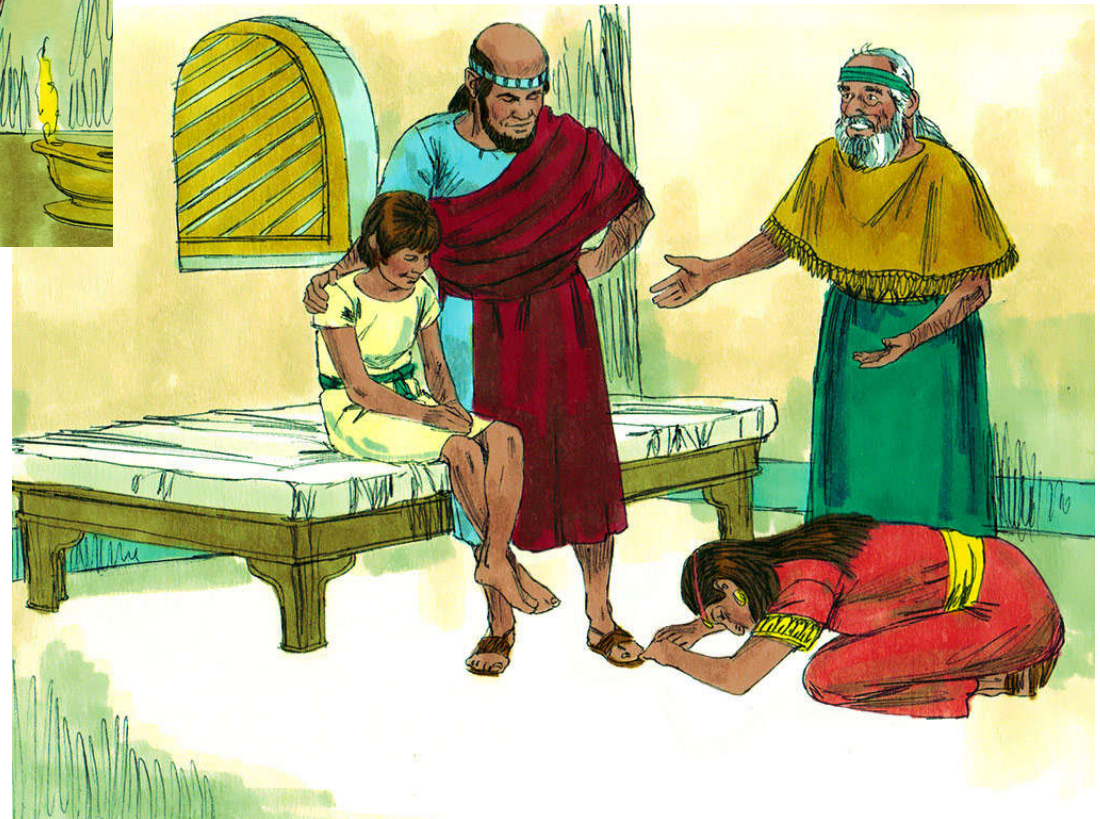
The Widow at Zarephath who offered hospitality to Elijah despite being destitute (1 Ki 11). Her son was later raised from the dead (1 Ki 17).

WOMEN IN THE OT



The well-to-do Shunammite woman who kept a guest room for Elisha (1 Kings 11).

At the prophet's prayer, God gave her a son who was later raised from the dead by Elisha (2 Kings 3).



WOMEN IN THE OT



The courageous Queen Esther, who risks her own life and favoured position to deliver Israel from genocide.

Ruth, who remained loyal to her widowed mother-in-law, even though it meant leaving her people and country.



WOMEN IN THE OT

Michal, the wife of David who thwarts an attempt on his life by Saul.



Michal

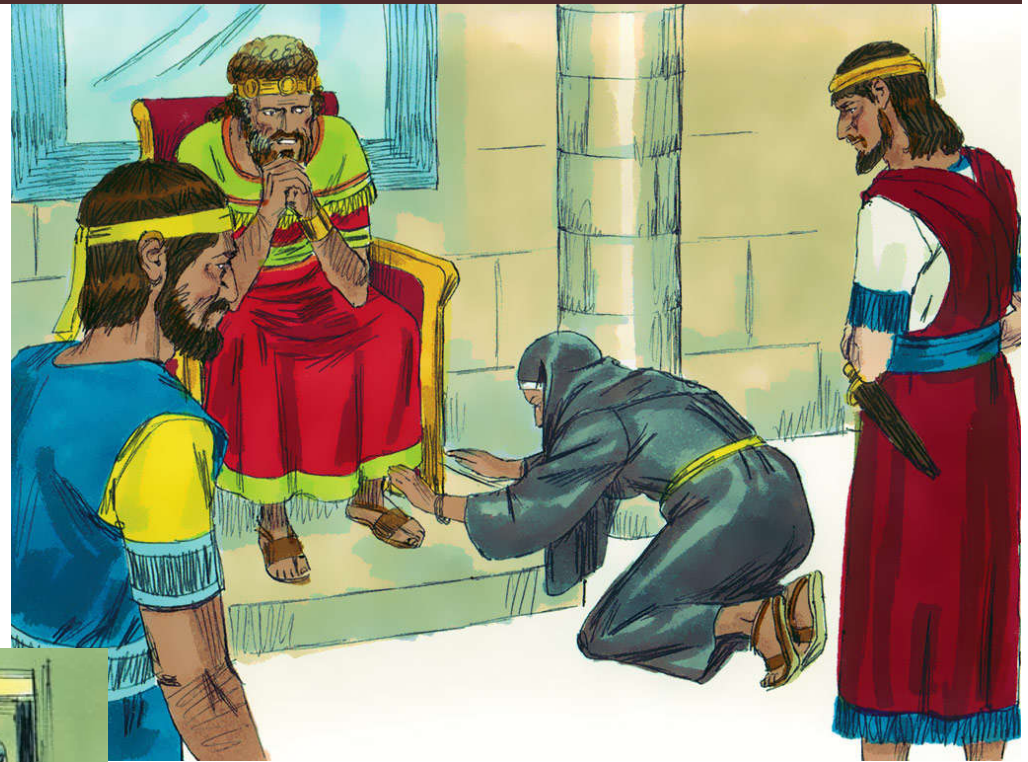


Abigail

Abigail, the wife of the wicked and stingy Nabal, who assists David's men with provisions and persuades David not to seek revenge.

WOMEN IN THE OT

It was the wise woman of Tekoa who was sent by Joab to persuade David to lift the ban on his son Absalom (2 Sam 14).



Jehosheba

The courageous Jehosheba saved her nephew (and future king) Jehoash from being murdered (2 Kings 11).

WOMEN IN THE OT

The Queen
of Sheba



The Queen of Sheba visits Solomon to learn from his wisdom (1 Kings 10).

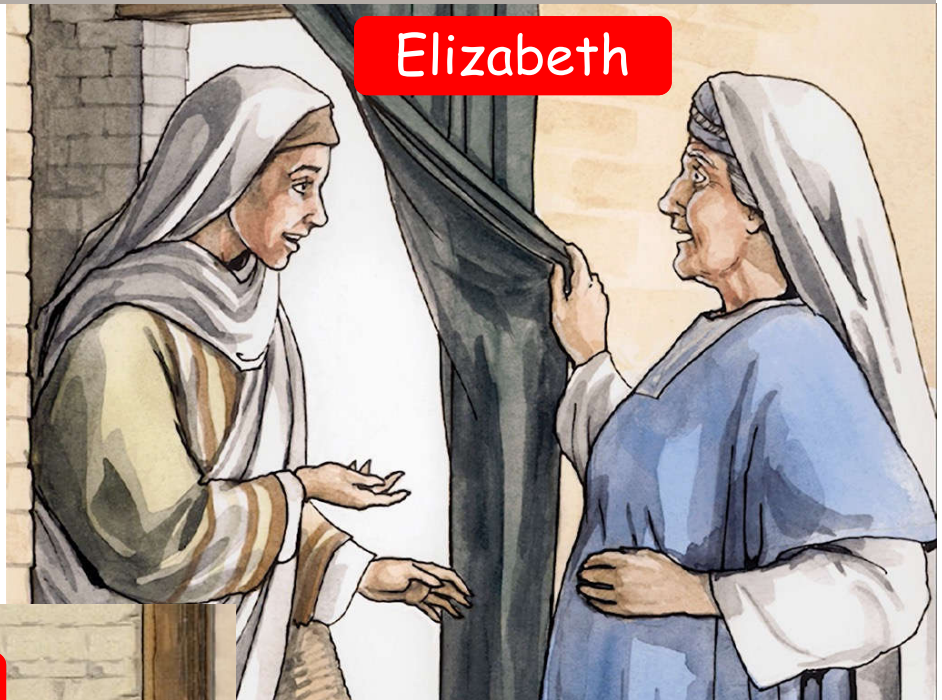
In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon personifies the divine attribute of Wisdom as a female ["Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square" (1:20)].



WOMEN IN THE NT

- Likewise the NT has many examples of prominent or influential women.

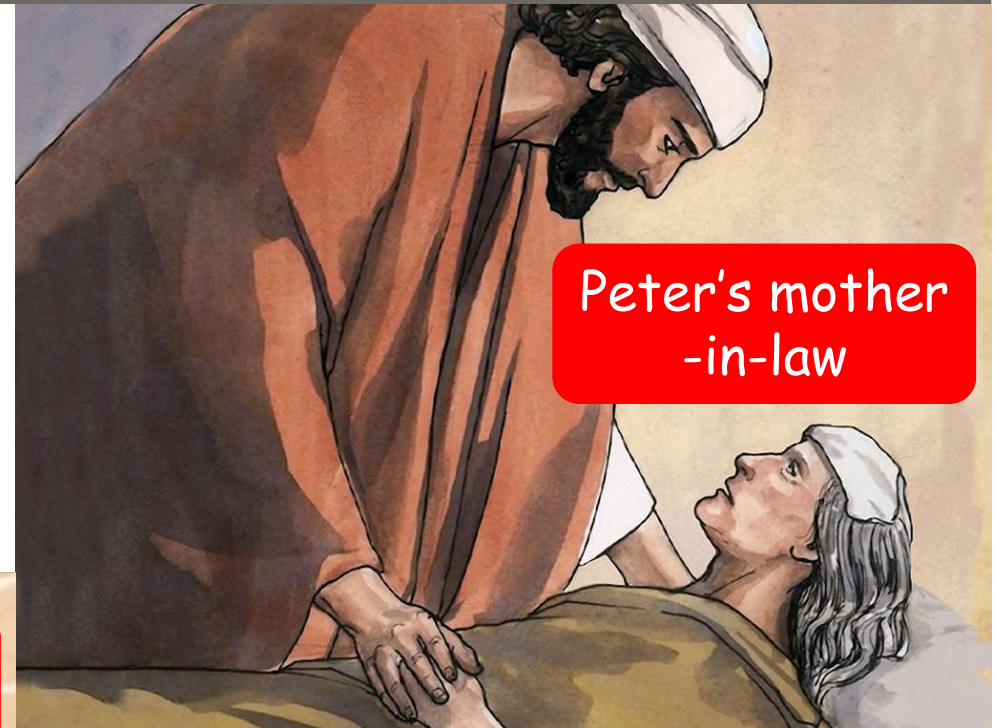
Elizabeth, the godly mother of John the Baptist.



Mary, who “found favour with God” and became the mother of our Lord.

JESUS AND WOMEN

- ❑ Besides the many females healed or delivered by Jesus (like Mary Magdalene, Peter's mother-in-law, the woman with the issue of blood,



the woman crippled for 18 years, Jairus's daughter, the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman), women feature prominently in the ministry of Jesus.

JESUS AND WOMEN

His first miracle is prompted by his mother Mary.



The poor widow



In the Temple he publicly commends the sacrificial giving of the poor widow in contrast to the offerings of the wealthy (Luke 21).

In Jesus' day:

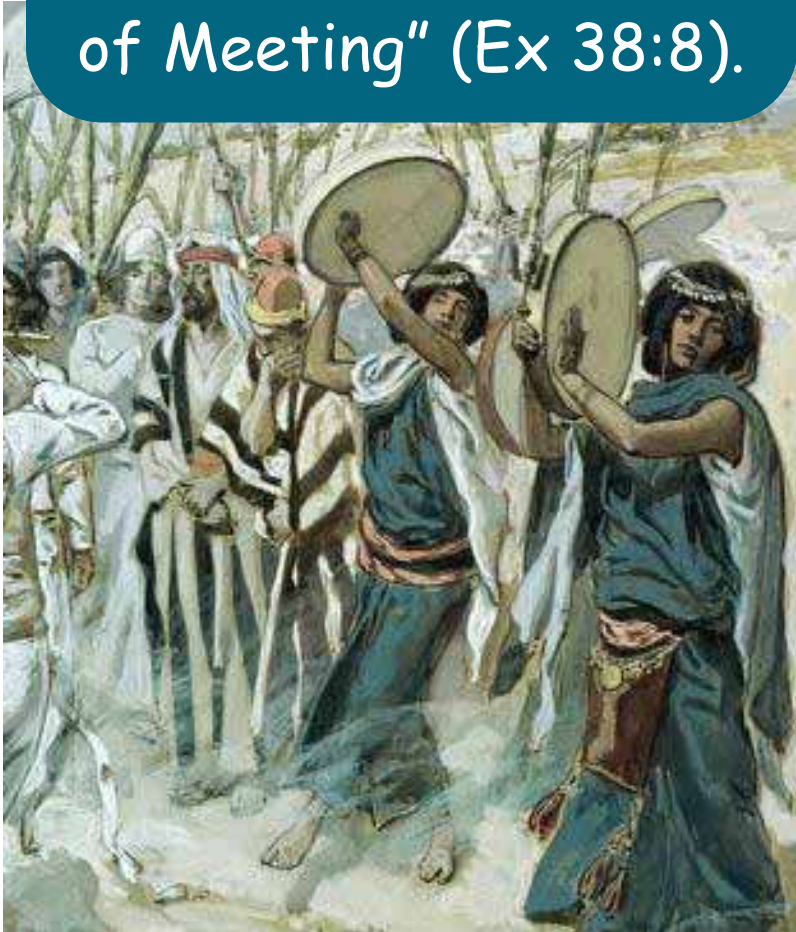
- 1) A woman's place was in the home.
 - 2) Women were not to be taught the Torah.
 - 3) Men were not supposed to speak with women in public.
 - 4) Women were regarded as inherently sinful.
 - 5) Women were not allowed to bear witness in court.
-

But Jesus defies these social norms:

- 1) Jesus accepts women leaving their households to join his ministry team.
 - 2) He teaches women.
 - 3) He engages and speaks with women in public.
 - 4) Jesus defends the women of ill-repute.
 - 5) He uses them as his initial witnesses to his resurrection.
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1) PLACE IN THE HOME

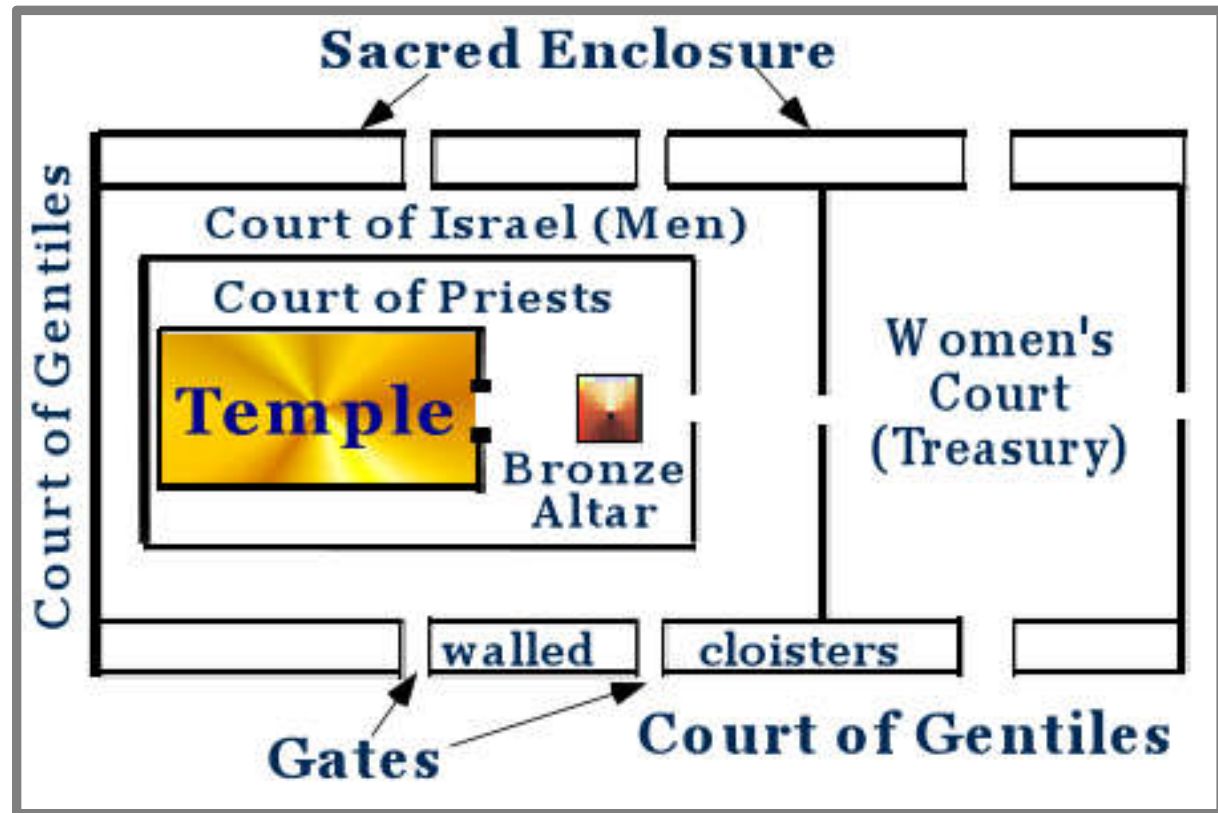
In the tabernacle there were "women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting" (Ex 38:8).



They also prayed (1 Sam 1:12), played music and sang there (Psalm 68:24-25, 1 Chron 25:5-6).

1) PLACE IN THE HOME

- ❑ But things had changed by Jesus' day. Women were separated from men in private, public and religious life.



- ❑ In synagogues women were separated from the men and were not permitted to read aloud. They could go to the Temple in Jerusalem, but were restricted to the Women's Court. There was no such court mentioned in the Biblical descriptions of Solomon's Temple.

1) PLACE IN THE HOME

- ❑ Yet it's clear that Jesus had female disciples.
 - Matt 12:47-50 (NIV) Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to **his disciples**, he said, Here are my **mother** and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and **sister and mother.**"



By including women in his response, Jesus indicates that there were disciples in the room who were women.

1) PLACE IN THE HOME

□ These female disciples played a vital role in the ministry team of Jesus, forming a regular part of his entourage.

➤ Matt 27:55-56 (NIV) Many women ... had **followed Jesus from Galilee**

to care for his needs.
Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.



1) PLACE IN THE HOME

- ❑ Luke indicates that these female disciples were rendering financial support to the ministry of Jesus and the Twelve.
- Luke 8:1-3 (NIV) After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. **These women were helping to support them out of their own means.**
- ❑ Note that some of these were women of high standing in society, while others were women of ill repute.

2) NOT TO BE TAUGHT

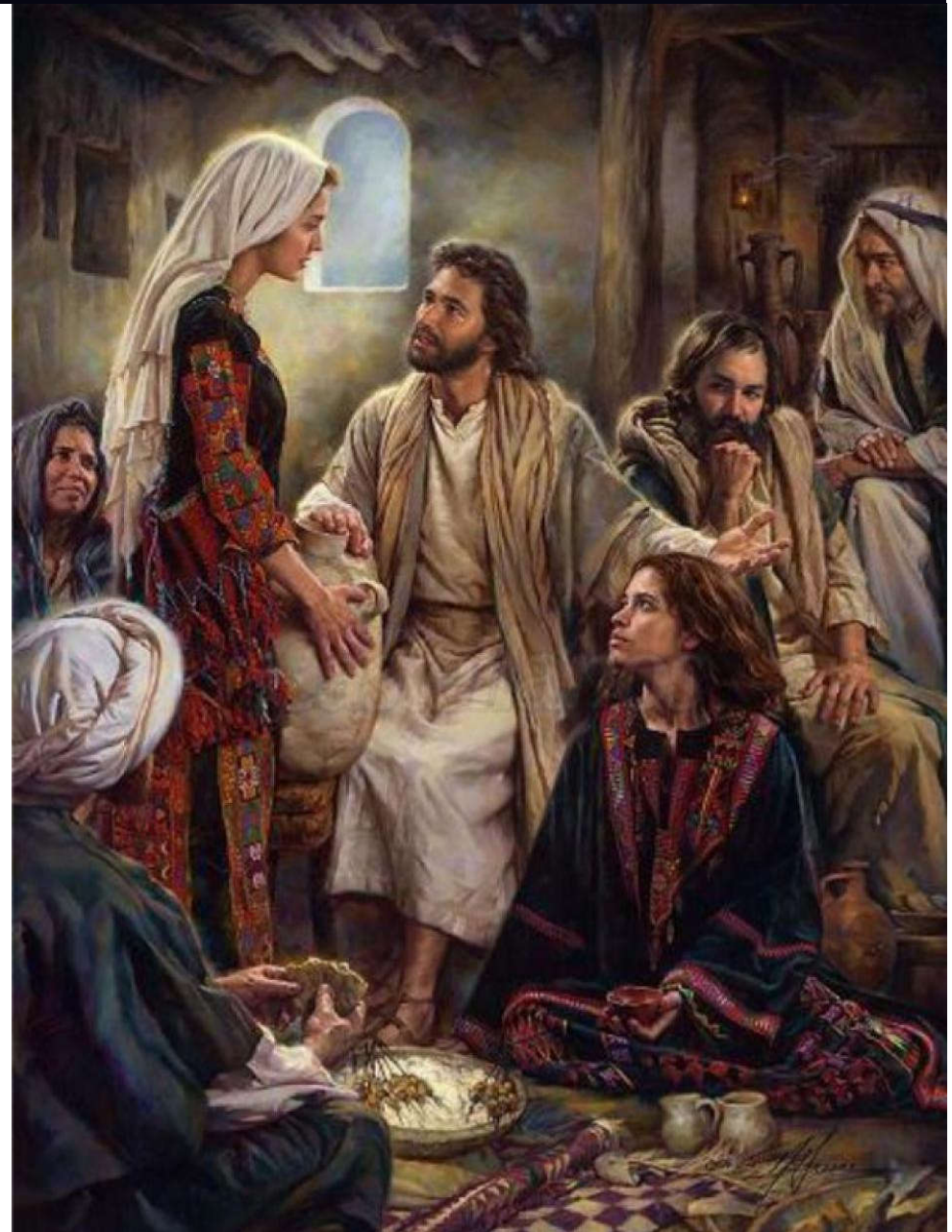
- ❑ Jewish culture in the first century was decidedly patriarchal. The daily prayers of Jewish men included this prayer of thanksgiving: "Praised be God that he has not created me a woman."¹
- ❑ The women with whom Jesus spoke were very likely illiterate, since the rabbis did not consider it incumbent upon women to learn to read in order to study the Scriptures... the Talmud says, "It is foolishness to teach Torah to your daughter" (Sotah 20a).²
- ❑ Rabbi Eliezer, a first-century teacher, is noted for saying, "Rather should the word of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman."¹

¹ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/jesus-extraordinary-treatment-of-women>

² <https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/newsletter-jun-1988/jesus-and-the-role-of-women>

2) NOT TO BE TAUGHT

But Jesus not only allowed Mary of Bethany to learn at his feet, he commended her devotion (Lk 10:41-42). Paul says that he was "educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers" (Acts 22:3). When Luke says Mary sat "at Jesus feet" he uses terminology associated with rabbinic study, suggesting that she was his student.



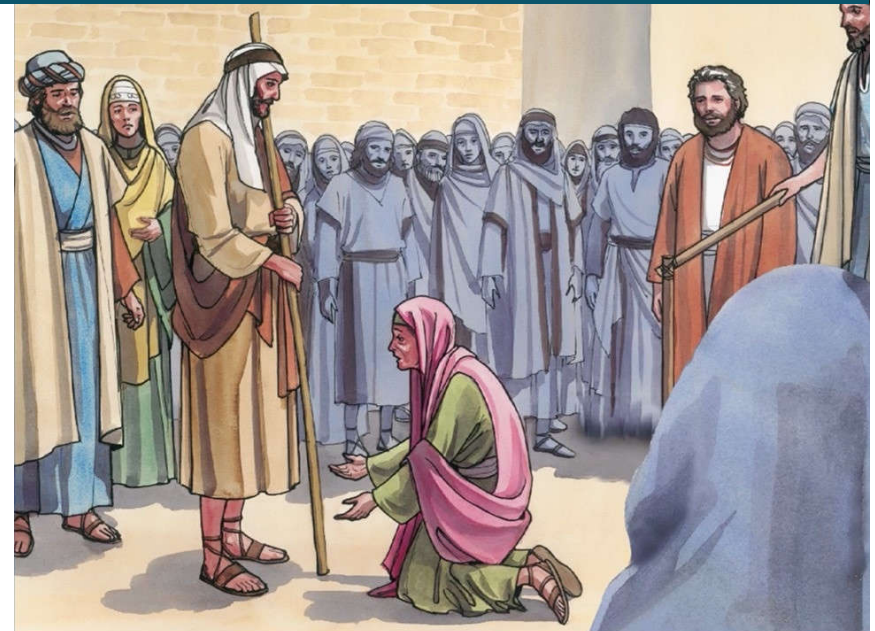
2) NOT TO BE TAUGHT

- ❑ Not only did Jesus have women disciples, they were the recipients of several prominent cases of Jesus' self-revelation.
- In the midst of her confusion and grief over her brother's death, on the way to the tomb Martha has Jesus reveal to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. " (John 11:25-26).
- He tells the Samaritan woman that he is the Messiah and the giver of Living Water that will quench our spiritual thirst (John 4).
- He tells Mary Magdalene that he is ascending to the Father after his Resurrection (John 20:17).

2) NOT TO BE TAUGHT

While often rebuking the disciples for a lack of faith, Jesus praises the faith of woman with the issue of blood who touched the hem of his garment (Luke 8:48).

The disciples say to Jesus of the Syro-Phoenician woman, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." But he speaks to her and impressed at her answer, commends her great faith (Matt 15).



2) NOT TO BE TAUGHT

In Bethany "a woman named Martha opened her home to him" (Luke 10:38).

And her sister, Mary would anoint his feet with an expensive perfume and wipe his feet with her hair in the face of criticism from Judas Iscariot that it was a waste of money. Jesus would defend her by saying, "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me." (Mark 14:6)

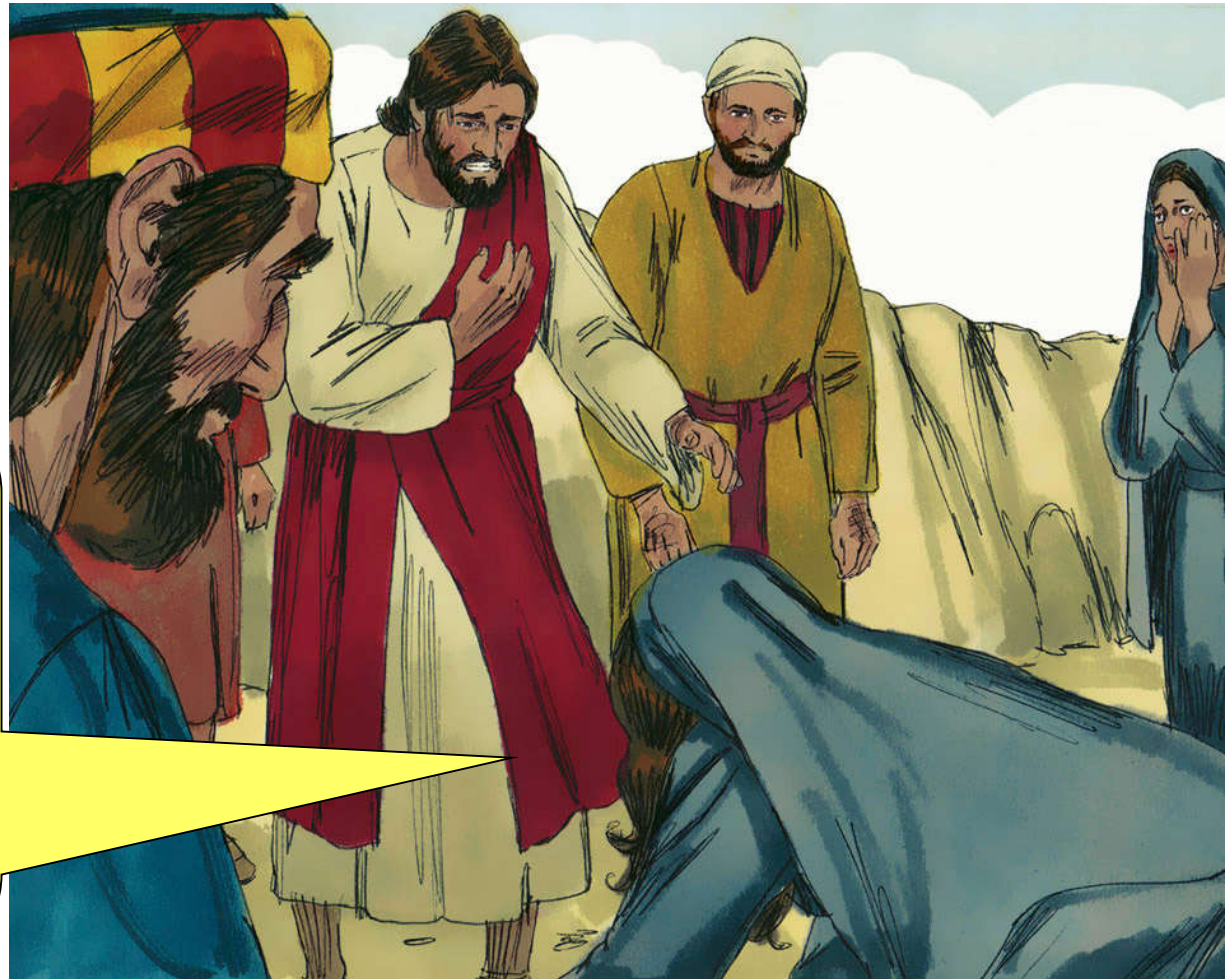


2) NOT TO BE TAUGHT

- ❑ Jesus counts these sisters as close friends.
 - John 11:5 (NIV) Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
- ❑ Martha makes a confession of faith similar to that made by Peter.

Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.

(John 11:27, NIV)



3) NO SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

- ❑ In 1st-century Israel, if a woman was in public, she was prohibited from conversing with men. But we see Jesus publicly associating with women and talking to them on numerous occasions. This included women with a poor reputation.



He speaks to a Samaritan woman who has had multiple husbands and is currently living in adultery. The disciples "were surprised to find him talking with a woman" (John 4:27).

3) NO SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

- ❑ Jesus not only speaks with her but also enters into a prolonged dialogue, a dialogue which recognizes and honours her thirst for religious truth. Ultimately, he reveals his identity



as the Messiah. When his disciples return, they are clearly uneasy with Jesus' behaviour. John includes the questions they are afraid to verbalize: "What are you looking for? Why are you talking with her?" (John 4:27). ¹

¹ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/jesus-extraordinary-treatment-of-women>

3) NO SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

□ A Wikipedia article notes:

- Jesus often spoke directly to women in public... He spoke freely with the woman taken in adultery (John 8:10-11), with the widow of Nain (Luke 7:12-13), the woman with the bleeding disorder (Luke 8:48; cf. Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:34), and a woman who called to him from a crowd (Luke 11:27-28). Similarly, Jesus addressed a woman bent over for eighteen years (Luke 13:12) and a group of women on the route to the cross (Luke 23:27-31). Jesus spoke in a thoughtful, caring manner. Each synoptic writer records Jesus addressing the woman with the bleeding disorder tenderly as "daughter" and he refers to the bent woman as a "daughter of Abraham" (Luke 13:16).¹

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Bible

3) NO SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

- Barbara Leonhard (PhD in Christian spirituality) writes that "Jesus refuses to treat women as inferior. Given the decidedly negative cultural view of women in Jesus' time, the Gospel writers each testify to Jesus' treating women with respect, frequently responding in ways that reject cultural norms. He recognizes their dignity, their desires and their gifts. Jesus, for example, speaks to women in public. He steps forward in a crowd of mourners to speak with the widow at Nain, and to call her son back to life (Luke 7:11-17)." ¹



¹ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/jesus-extraordinary-treatment-of-women>

3) NO SPEAKING IN PUBLIC

- ❑ In Luke 13 Jesus heals the woman crippled for 18 years, by publicly laying hands on her in the synagogue. When the synagogue ruler becomes indignant that Jesus has healed on the Sabbath, Jesus refers to her as a "daughter of Abraham".



- ❑ While the expression "son of Abraham" was often used to indicate that a male Jew was recognized as bound by covenant to God, women had never been called "daughters of Abraham." With this title, Jesus recognizes this woman as having equal worth.¹

¹ Ibid.

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

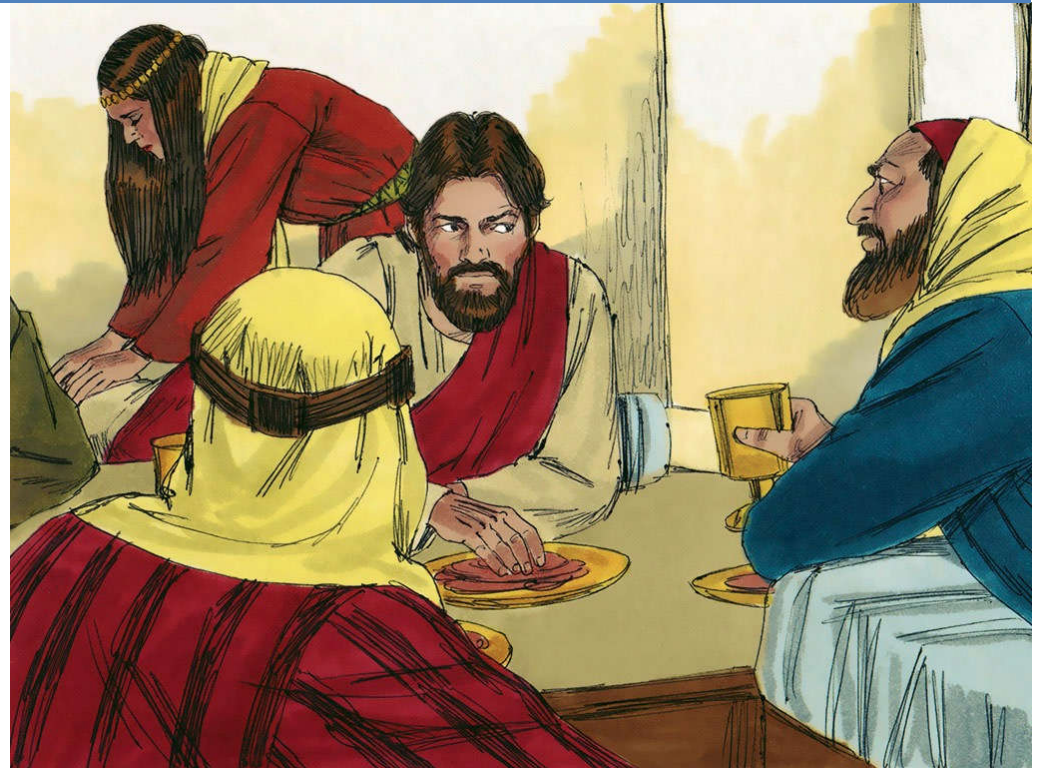
Jesus often assisted and defended the helpless, downcast women including those of poor reputation. He defends the sinful woman who anoints his feet at a Pharisee's house (Luke 7:36ff).



- ❑ Jesus defends women and even treats them with dignity in situations that seem to demand judgment by the Law. E.g. the sinful woman who anointed him and the woman caught in adultery.

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

- ❑ In both cases he sees the person as someone deserving compassion. In Luke's narrative ... after Jesus is touched and anointed by a woman who is a recognized sinner, we hear the expected reaction from Simon, his host.¹



- ❑ This religious leader, a Pharisee, is dismayed and says to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." (Luke 7:39).

¹ Ibid.

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

- ❑ Not only does Jesus tell the woman that her sins are forgiven, but he also uses her actions and the love which prompted them to teach his offended host! ¹



- ❑ Jesus tells Simon a parable about two people, one who was forgiven a small debt and the other a great debt. The latter showed greater love to their benefactor.

¹ Ibid.

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

- ❑ The parable appeals to Simon to look beyond the way he has always stereotyped people and to rather see the woman as a sincere penitent - a woman of great love.

Her many sins have been forgiven;
hence, she has shown great love.



4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

The fact that the Samaritan woman came to the well on her own suggests that she was an outcast because of her sinful lifestyle.



But Jesus engages her in conversation and sees her worth despite the fact that she is a woman of ill-repute and a despised foreigner.

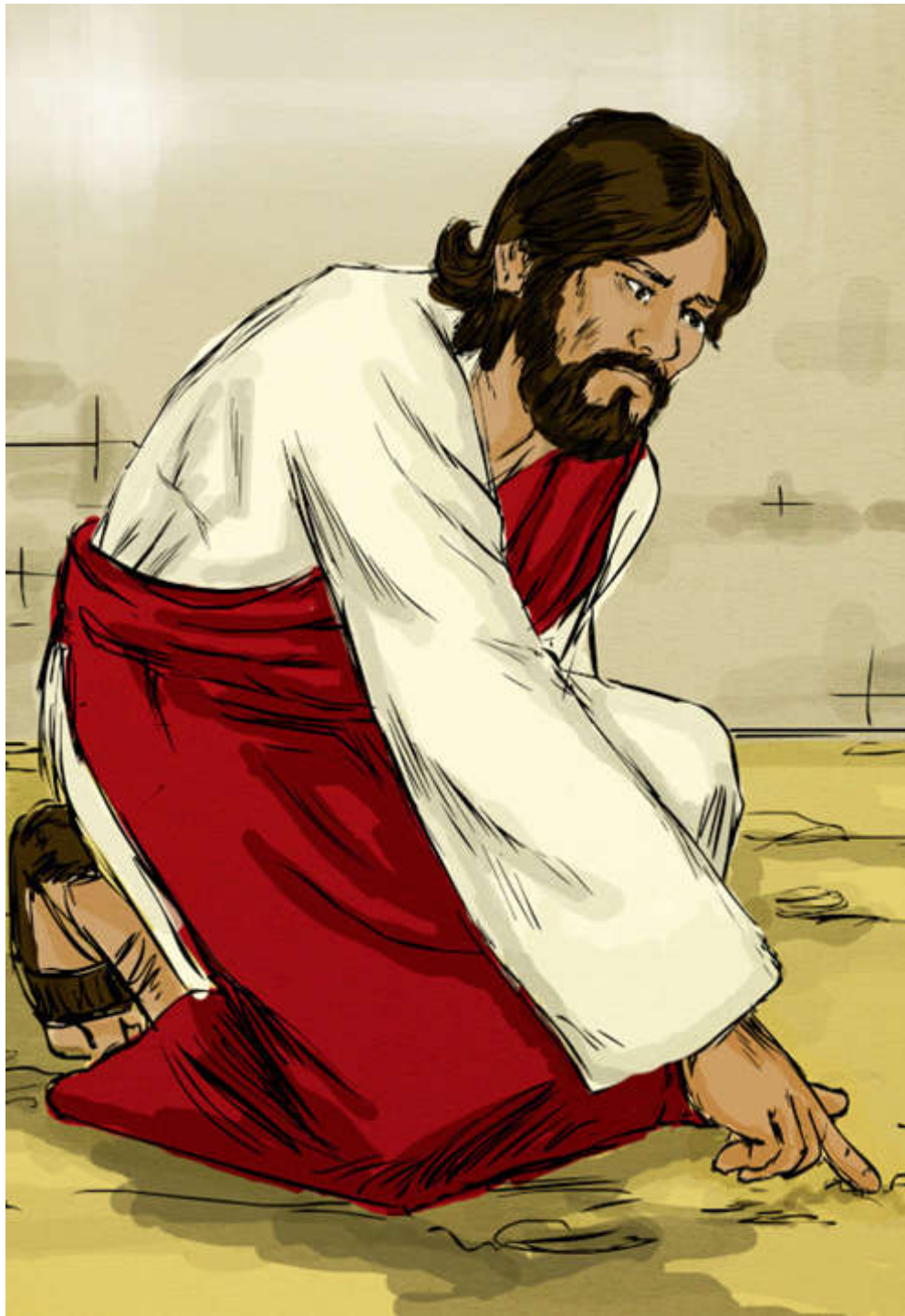
4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

The treatment of the adulterous woman by her accusers (John 8) clearly reflects the attitude towards women in that day. Adultery is one sin which is impossible to commit on your own, yet the man is not brought to Jesus.

The woman is somehow deemed to be solely responsible for the sin.



But Jesus protects her from the would-be executioners and refrains from condemning her.



By instructing her accusers "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7) he is reminding them that it is not only women who are sinners. Men and women alike, themselves included, are sinful. Jesus would later tell the chief priests and elders that "the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you". (Matt 21:31)

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

- ❑ But neither does Jesus just gloss over her sin. He treats her as someone who is capable of being held accountable and exhorts her to renounce her life of sin.
- ❑ Jesus held women personally responsible for their own behaviour as seen in his dealings with the woman at the well (John 4:16-18), the woman taken in adultery (John 8:10-11), and the sinful woman who anointed his feet (Luke 7:44-50 and the other three gospels). Jesus dealt with each as having the personal freedom and enough self-determination to deal with their own repentance and forgiveness.¹



¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Bible

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

□ Barbara Leonhard notes:

- Jesus refuses to view women as unclean or especially deserving of punishment. Women who were menstruating or persons who had any flow of blood were considered ritually unclean. In this condition, women were not allowed to participate in most religious rituals. Anything or anyone she touched was deemed unclean. The most dramatic story concerning a woman in this state is the account of the woman who had a flow of blood for 12 years (Luke 8:43-48). Luke emphasizes Jesus' compassion for the woman by the way he situates the story.¹

¹ <https://www.franciscanmedia.org/jesus-extraordinary-treatment-of-women>

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

- ❑ Chapter 8 features Jairus, an official of the synagogue, coming to Jesus to beg him to cure his daughter.



While they are on the way, this frightened, suffering woman, who has been ill and consequently isolated for years, touches his cloak.¹

¹ Ibid.

4) INHERENTLY SINFUL

- ❑ Jesus turns his attention from the synagogue official to the woman. He wants to know who touched his garment. By religious norms, the woman's touch—even of his cloak—rendered Jesus unclean.¹
- ❑ It seems that the woman was aware of this because she was hoping to go “unnoticed”. But when Jesus insists on knowing who touched him she “came trembling and fell at his feet” (v. 47), probably expecting to be reprimanded.
- ❑ If the woman expects him to be angry with her for approaching, she is greatly surprised. He says nothing of her ritual impurity, but instead addresses her as “Daughter,” says that her faith has saved her and tells her to go in peace (8:48).¹

¹ Ibid.

5) BEARING WITNESS

- ❑ Women were not allowed to testify in court. In effect, this categorized them with Gentiles, minors, deaf-mutes and “undesirables” such as gamblers, the insane, usurers, and pigeon-racers, who were also denied that privilege.¹
- ❑ Yet Luke appears to have relied heavily on the testimony of women as he wrote both Luke and Acts (including Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and Mary the mother of James.)
- ❑ New Testament scholar Ben Witherington III says “Jesus broke with both biblical and rabbinic traditions that restricted women’s roles in religious practices, and he rejected attempts to devalue the worth of a woman, or her word of witness.”²

¹ <https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/newsletter-jun-1988/jesus-and-the-role-of-women> ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Bible

5) BEARING WITNESS

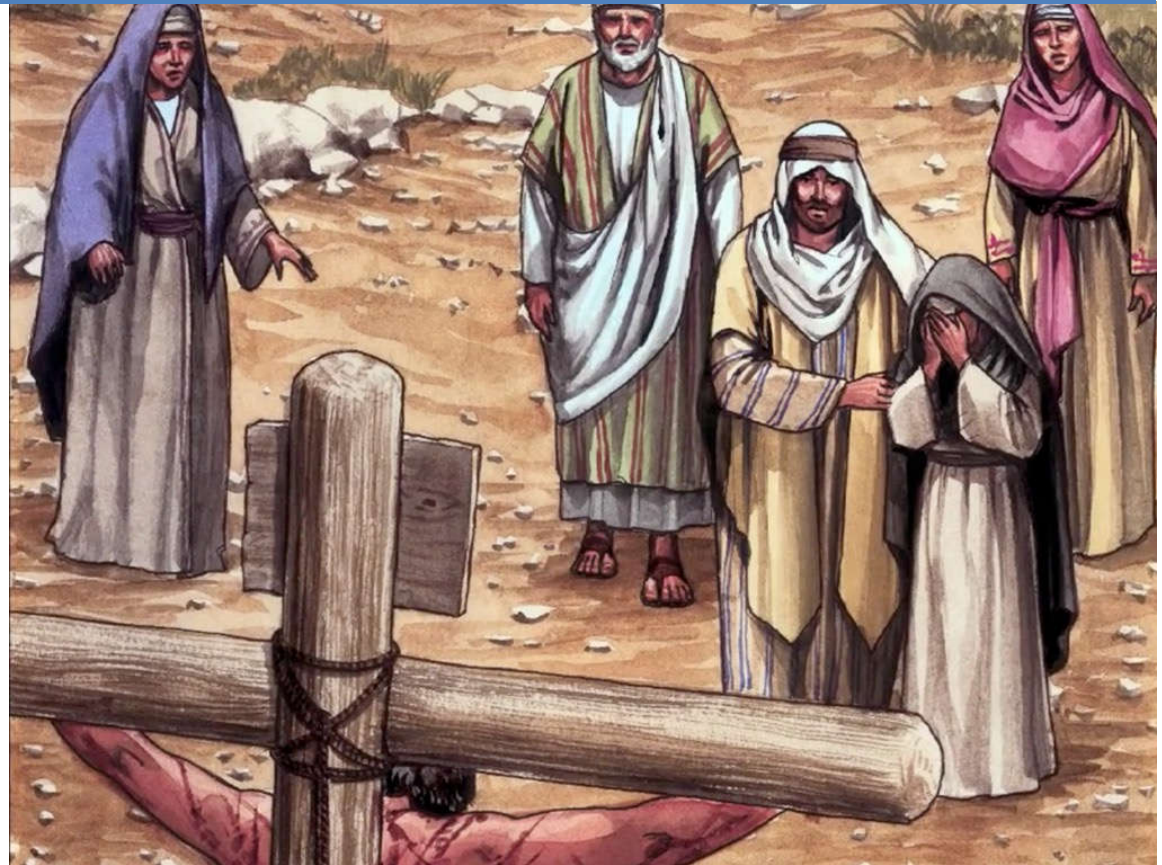
- ❑ Although in Jewish thought a woman's testimony was not trustworthy, the excited words of the Samaritan woman from Sychar are heard and acted upon.



- John 4:39 (ESV)
Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."

5) BEARING WITNESS

- ❑ Jesus' women disciples generally surpassed their brother disciples in terms of dependability, particularly in events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion. While the men hid, with the exception of John, it was only the women who stayed at the cross.



- John 19:25 (NIV) Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

5) BEARING WITNESS

□ Mark 15:40-41 (NIV)

Some women were watching from a distance.

Among them were **Mary Magdalene**, **Mary the mother of James the**

younger and of **Joses**, and **Salome**... **Many other women** who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.



5) BEARING WITNESS

- When Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus put Jesus in the tomb "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb" (Matt 27:61) and they "saw where he



was laid" (Mark 15:47). This is why the women were the first witnesses to the Resurrection. They knew where Jesus had been buried.

5) BEARING WITNESS

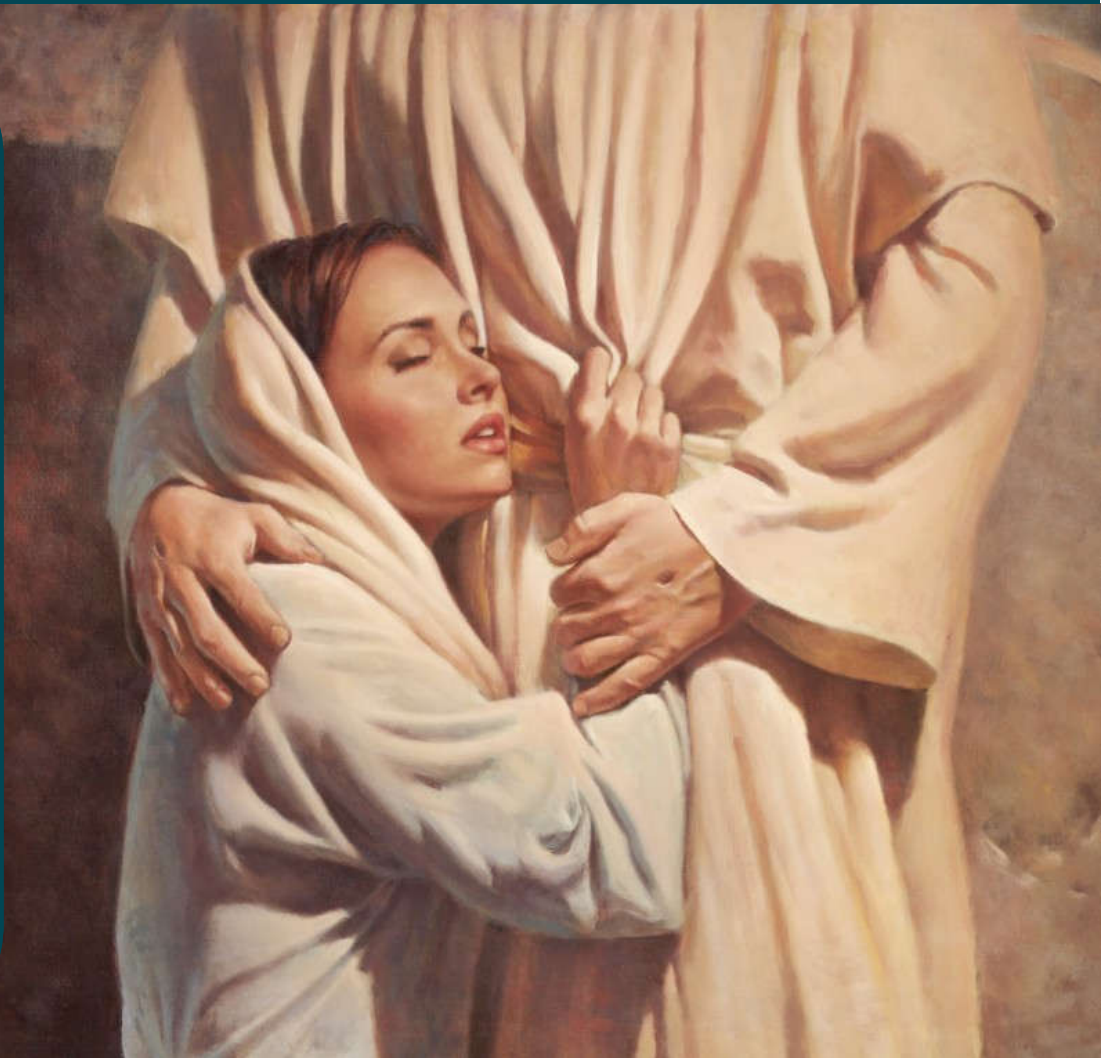
- ❑ Just as they had ministered to Jesus during his ministry, so Mary Magdalene and her companions intended to minister to him after his death.



- Mark 16:1 (NIV)
When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.

5) BEARING WITNESS

Later on, when Peter and John have left the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene becomes the first to see the resurrected Christ. She recognizes Jesus when she hears him speak her name (John 20:11-18), testifying to the close relationship they had.



- Mark 16:9 (NIV) When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene...

5) BEARING WITNESS



- And then she "went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping" (Mark 16:10).

As such, Mary Magdalene is called "the Apostle to the Apostles", a title first bestowed on her by Hippolytus about 200 AD.

Mary Magdalene is mentioned by name 12 times in the gospels, more than most of the apostles. She always appears first, whenever she is listed in the Synoptic Gospels as a member of a group of women.

5) BEARING WITNESS

In his second appearance, Jesus reveals himself to Mary's companions. These women are also appointed as emissaries (apostles) of Jesus to testify to the Resurrection.



Matt 28:9-10 (NIV)
Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. **Go and tell my brothers** to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

5) BEARING WITNESS

That the message of Jesus' Resurrection was first entrusted to women is regarded by many as strong evidence for the historicity of the Resurrection accounts.



- ❑ Had the accounts of the Resurrection been fabricated, women would never have been chosen as witnesses, since their testimony was inadmissible under Jewish law.

5) BEARING WITNESS

- ❑ According to Professor of religion Margaret Y. MacDonald, much of the vociferous pagan criticism of the early church is evidence of this "female initiative" which contributed to the reasons Roman society saw Christianity as a threat. Accusations that Christianity undermined the Roman family and male authority in the home were used to stir up opposition to Christianity and negatively influence public opinion.¹
- ❑ Celsus, a 2nd-century pagan philosopher and opponent of early Christianity, taunted that the church attracted "only foolish and low individuals, and persons devoid of perception, and slaves, and women, and children".²

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Bible

² Origen against Celsus 344, Ch 49

5) BEARING WITNESS

- ❑ MacDonald says Celsus' study of Christian scripture led him to focus on Mary Magdalene as the witness to the resurrection, as someone deluded by the "sorcery" by which Jesus did miracles, and as someone who then becomes one of Jesus' primary "instigators" and "perpetrators"... "In Celsus' work, Mary Magdalene's role in the resurrection story denigrates its credibility... From beginning to end, [Celsus says] the story of Jesus' life has been shaped by the 'fanciful imaginings' of women" thus lending enemy attestation to the importance of women in the early church and of Mary Magdalene herself."¹
- ❑ The fact that God entrusted the first proclamation of the Resurrection to women indicates that while humans might discriminate, God does not.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Bible

PAUL AND WOMEN

- ❑ The Bible teaches equality of worth for male and female. The apostle Paul was not a woman-hating misogynist as some have portrayed him. He writes to the Galatians:
 - Gal 3:28 (NIV) There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, **nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**
- ❑ Mark Keown writes of the above verse:
 - This gives a radical social vision of a church in which the great social divisions that beset the Roman world and the world today are torn asunder in Christ. There is **no place for racism, elitism, or sexism.** All are one. All are equal in Christ. ¹

¹ <https://nzchristiannetwork.org.nz/should-women-lead-churches-and-preach>

PAUL AND WOMEN

- ❑ At least 18 women are mentioned in Paul's letters, which indicates that he valued women's participation in church life. Paul's casual greetings to acquaintances offers solid evidence of many Jewish and Gentile women who were prominent in the early Christian movement.
- ❑ Many of these women were not mentioned alongside husbands or fathers! They were women esteemed by Paul, not because of who they were married to or because of their father.
- ❑ Paul entrusted the delivery of his letter to the Romans to Phoebe, a female deacon (16:1).

PAUL AND WOMEN

- ❑ In a long list of greetings in Romans 16, one third of those he greets by name are women. There are 10 women that Paul referred to - including a deacon who was his benefactor, an outstanding apostle, a dear friend, a co-worker (i.e. an equal), hard workers for the Lord and one he considered to be a mother. ¹
- ❑ Paul refers to some of his closest associates (e.g. Timothy, Titus, Luke, Mark) as "co-workers". Paul also applies this term to several women.
- ❑ The most notable of his female co-workers is Priscilla and Paul not only mentions before her husband - he places her at the top of his list in Romans 16. ²

¹ He extends greeting to the mother of Rufus who he says "has been a mother to me, too" (v. 13). ² Greet **Priscilla** and Aquila, my **co-workers** in Christ Jesus. (v.3)

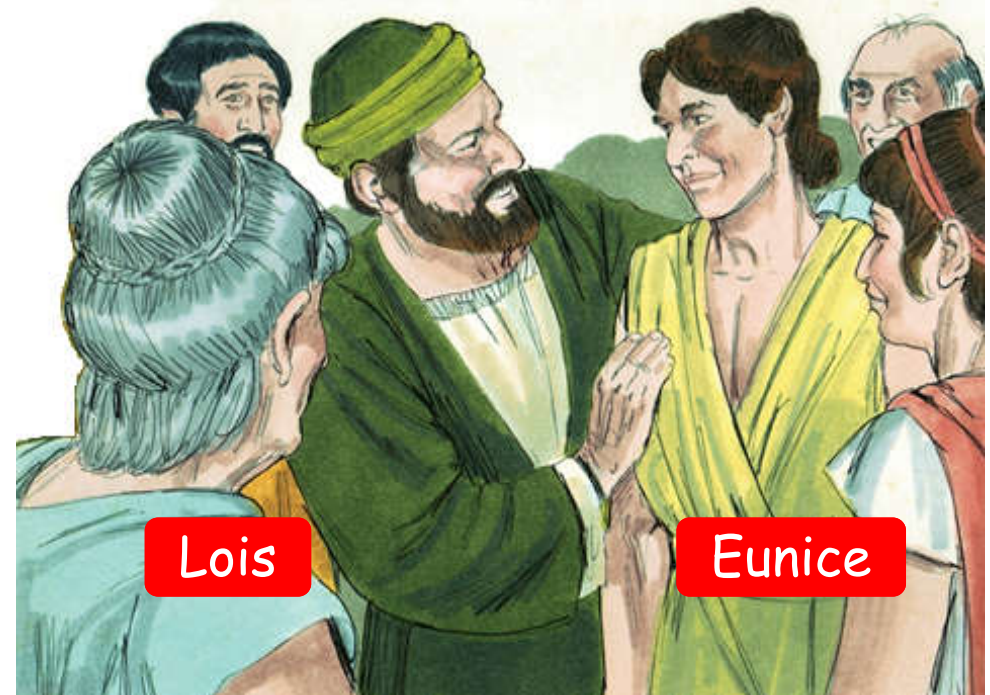
PAUL AND WOMEN

- ❑ Other women he considers to be hard workers are Mary of Rome,¹ Tryphena and Tryphosa² and his "dear friend" Persis.³
- ❑ He also regards Euodia and Syntyche in the Philippian church to be co-workers.
 - Phil 4:2-3 (NIV) I plead with **Euodia** and I plead with **Syntyche** to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have **contended at my side in the cause of the gospel**, along with Clement and the rest of my **co-workers**, whose names are in the book of life.

¹ Greet Mary, who has **worked hard for you**. (v.6) ² Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who **work hard in the Lord**. (v.12) ³ Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has **worked very hard in the Lord**. (v.12)

PAUL AND WOMEN

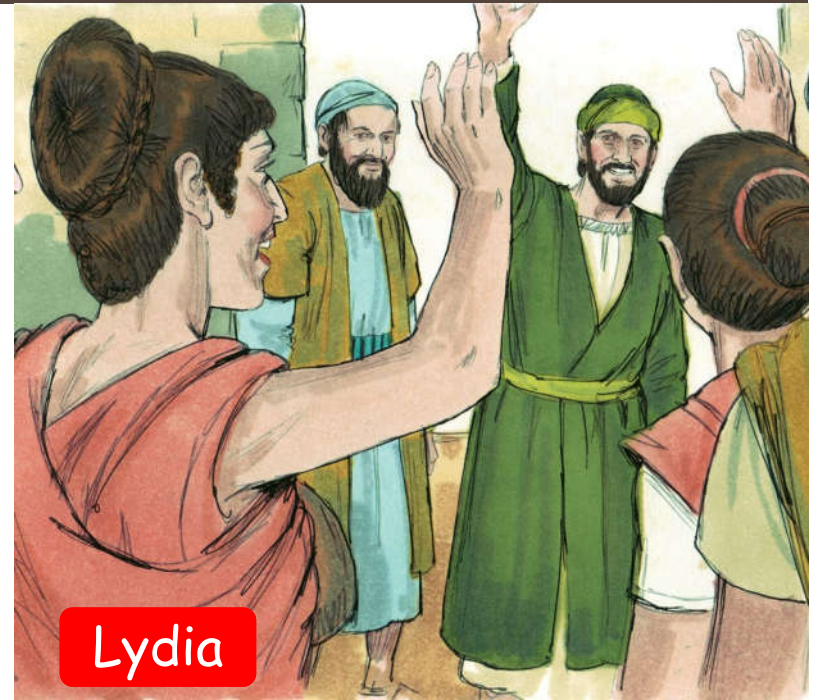
Eunice and Lois were the righteous mother and grandmother of Timothy, who raised him in the ways of God and were commended by Paul for this (2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-15).



In Philippi, Paul preaches to a group of women he meets at the river. Lydia - a businesswoman - believes and is baptised along with her household.

PAUL AND WOMEN

Paul and his companions then accept the hospitality extended by Lydia who persuades them to stay at her house.



- ❑ When most had deserted him in Rome at the trial before his execution, Paul sends greetings from four named people, one of whom is Claudia. All of this is strange behaviour for someone who supposedly disliked women.
- ❑ We'll see next time that women often hosted house churches. So it is clear that women were actively involved in the work of the early church. But did they hold any office in the church?

THE LAST DAYS

- ❑ On the Day of Pentecost, Peter saw in the event the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:28.



In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your **sons and daughters will prophesy**... Even on my servants, **both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:16-18 NIV)

- ❑ Pentecostals believe that while this outpouring of the Spirit on both men and women applied in the Apostolic Age, it has a special and more complete fulfilment in the Pentecostal movement spawned in the early 20th century.

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- ❑ George O. Wood served as General Superintendent of the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the US from 2007-2017 and has been Chairman of the World Assemblies of God Fellowship, the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world, since 2008. He previously served as General Secretary of the AG from 1993 to 2007.
- ❑ Wood writes, "My mother was ordained by the Assemblies of God in 1924-as were a host of other women in the early years. I grew up listening to my mother and other women preaching the gospel. →



George O. Wood

A/G US

- ← What was their basis for so doing? The Holy Spirit had called them in light of the prophetic promise of Joel 2:28—30 fulfilled in Acts 2:17,18—in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, including daughters as well as sons who would prophesy, including women as well as men servants. In Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he announced that God had launched the fulfilment of that promise. **It's not surprising, therefore, that the Pentecostal church has always embraced women in ministry—since to do such is Pentecostal.** It's what the Spirit promised to do in the age before the coming of the Lord. God is an equal opportunity employer; therefore, so must we. ¹

¹ http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/008_exploring.cfm

CONCLUSION

- ❑ In closing off, here is an excerpt from the A/G US Position Paper on "The Role of Women in Ministry":
 - The Assemblies of God has been blessed and must continue to be blessed by the ministry of God's gifted and commissioned daughters. The Bible repeatedly affirms that God pours out His Spirit upon both men and women and thereby gifts both sexes for ministry in His Church. Therefore, we must continue to affirm the gifts of women in ministry and spiritual leadership. Surely, the enormous challenge of the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) requires the full deployment of all God's Spirit-gifted ministers, both men and women.¹

¹ <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/The-Role-of-Women-in-Ministry>

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