

“I’m A Woman, What Can I Do?”

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

We have all heard Paul was a misogynist, a woman hater. We have also heard women really don't have a very important role in the church according to the Bible. Skeptics and feminists have rejected the Bible because of its anti-woman bias and, regrettably, too many Christians have apologized for said bias. The reason I say “regrettably” is not because we should never apologize for the Bible position. Rather, I say “regrettably” because it is always regrettable when people attribute a position to the Bible that the Bible doesn't teach. Nevertheless, this myth and a skewed perspective regarding what it takes to be an important part of the church has led many Christian women to struggle, asking, “I’m a woman, what can I do?” Let me ask you, have you ever taken the time to read exactly what the New Testament does say about women? Have you ever taken the time to see what women did in the New Testament? We know that the role of women within the church is limited in one way, women are not allowed to exercise authority over men in the church (**I Timothy 2:11-12**). Does that really mean that women are nothing more than a burden on the church that follows the New Testament pattern? Does that really mean that if we can fit a woman into teaching a children's Bible class we have a place for her, otherwise, according to the New Testament order, she is nothing more than a pew warmer? Absolutely not! During this lesson, I cannot answer specifically what you as an individual woman can do. You, like men, have different abilities, talents, opportunities and resources which help determine what you can do. But I can present to you the New Testament picture of women. I can show you what women did and what they were told to do. You, assessing your own gifts and abilities, can determine what you can do.

Discussion:

- I. In **Matthew 28:1-10**, we find perhaps the most glorious picture of women to be found in all the New Testament. Those women who came to the tomb to provide what they thought would be their final act of service to Jesus, preparing His body for burial, were the first to hear of the resurrection. They were the first to see Jesus. They were the first to proclaim the message of a resurrected Savior. Before any of the apostles taught the gospel, these women did.
- II. In **Acts 9:36-43**, we learn of one of the greatest of all Christians, Tabitha. She was a woman who lived to serve her fellow sisters. She used her talents, abilities, opportunities and resources to provide for the needs of others. We see the widows weeping over her and showing the tunics she made for them. We easily recognize the integral part she played in the work of the church in Joppa. Her love, her support, her service was needed to help that church continue and grow. Here was a sister that was so important to the church that when she died, they sent for Peter to bring her back. Maybe I have missed it. But I have yet to find the passage where a church called an apostle to come raise their preacher from the dead.
- III. In **Acts 12:12**, Peter, after his escape from prison, immediately proceeded to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark. Why? Because she had opened her home as a place for Christians to pray. This obviously wasn't a one-time event. She must have been known for such work. Otherwise, why would Peter go there first? Consider the work she would have done preparing her home for such a gathering, inviting Christians to come and recruiting someone to lead this gathering. The kind of meeting she had in her home does not take place accidentally. It took planning and work. And what an impact it would have in the church in Jerusalem. This was a work that drew Christians closer to God and one another. This was a work that developed the spiritual strength and solidarity of all that were involved. John Mark's mother did this work.
- IV. In **Acts 16:14-15** we learn of Lydia, a seller of purple and a worshiper of God. Additionally we read of her great hospitality to Paul and those with him. They had come into Philippi without a place to stay and she opened her home to them. But it extended further than hospitality when things were going good. Even after things turned sour in Philippi and Paul and Silas had been arrested, beaten and imprisoned. Her home was still open to them in **Acts 16:40**. In fact, that verse leads me to believe that her house was open to the other brethren and was the place where Paul and Silas were able to encourage the other brethren to remain strong in the face of persecution.
- V. In **Acts 18**, we meet Priscilla, a tent-maker. According to **Acts 18:18**, Priscilla even traveled with Paul through part of his missionary journeys. But the most important passage comes in **Acts 18:26** when we see that Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, took Apollos aside and taught him the way of God more accurately. Can there be any more important work than explaining the way of God more accurately? I cannot believe this passage means that Aquila taught while Priscilla simply sat by as decoration. Together they taught the way of God more accurately to Apollos, who went on to be a great worker for God in Corinth and elsewhere. Even further, as Paul closed out his letter to the Romans, in **Romans 16:3-4**, Paul demonstrated that not only was he thankful to Priscilla but all the churches of the Gentiles were thankful to Priscilla for her work and sacrifice.

- VI. In **Acts 21:8-9**, we read of Philip and his daughters. The amazing thing about his four daughters is that they were each prophetesses. Do you think having the gift of prophecy made them important in the church at Caesarea? Of course it did. Indeed, we know they used this gift without exercising authority over the men in the congregation. But nevertheless they used the gift and the church benefited from their prophetic teaching.
- VII. In **Romans 16:1-2**, we learn of Phoebe who was a servant of the church at Cenchrea. We have studied this passage enough to be able to explain why it does not teach that Phoebe held the church office of deacon. But in our desire to make that clear, based on the qualifications of **I Timothy 3:8ff**, we have missed the great esteem Paul has for this sister in Christ. We have missed that this woman was a worker in the church in Cenchrea. Such an important worker that Paul commended her to the Roman brethren and demanded the Roman church help her in whatever way she needed. Why? Because she was a helper of many and had even been a helper of Paul.
- VIII. In **Romans 16:6-16**, Paul mentions at least seven women. Mary (**vs. 6**), Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis (**vs. 12**), Rufus' mother (**vs. 13**), Julia and the sister of Nereus (**vs. 15**). Mary had worked hard for the church in Rome. Tryphena and Tryphosa were workers in the Lord. Persis was a beloved sister who had worked hard for the church. Rufus' mother had been as a mother to Paul. What compliments Paul offered these sisters.
- IX. In **I Corinthians 1:11**, we learn of Chloe who had such concern for the church in Corinth that she reported to Paul the problems of division, making way for great teaching in that congregation.
- X. In **Philippians 4:2-3**, we read of Euodia and Syntyche. I recognize they were evidently having some kind of strife between them, but then didn't Paul and Barnabas have some strife between themselves at one time? Paul, however, makes special mention of these two sisters because they were fellow workers who had shared in his struggle in the cause of the gospel. He directed the church to give these two sisters whatever help they needed because they were such workers.
- XI. In **Colossians 4:15**, we read of Nympha and the church in her house. Here again we read of a woman who had opened her home as a place of worship. This time not just for a group from within the church, but for the entire congregation. How important was she in that work?
- XII. In **II Timothy 1:5**, we read of Lois and Eunice, faithful Christians despite the apparent unfaithfulness of Eunice's husband. We know of the work they did in passing their faith along to Timothy. According to **II Timothy 3:15**, this happened as Timothy was taught from childhood the sacred scriptures that lead to salvation. Never underestimate the importance of teaching our children. These women held the future in their arms and prepared that future by passing along their faith to him. We have all heard the saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." It does. Please, don't give the job of rocking the cradle up to the worldly.
- XIII. In **I Timothy 5:10**, Paul provides a picture of the widow indeed, that is, the widow who can be considered for being put on the church roll. Here is a woman that provided indispensable work in the church. She was hospitable. She was a foot washer, that is a real servant. She assisted Christians in distress. She was devoted to every good work.
- XIV. In **Titus 2:3-5**, Paul describes the responsibilities of older and younger women. But, tucked neatly in the middle of this, Paul silently tells Titus there is something that he doesn't need to be doing. He shouldn't be spending time training the young women. Rather, the older women need to be doing such. How important it is for older women to spend time passing on wisdom to the younger. This is not just during women's Bible classes, scheduled in the midst of our planned curriculum. This is older women spending time with, advising, counseling and teaching younger women. This is older women spending time with younger women individually mentoring them to be good Christians, wives, mothers and workers in the church. Paul didn't ask the preacher to do this, he asked the women to do it.

Conclusion:

I have no doubt that I have missed some other great examples of women in the New Testament. This, of course, says nothing of the great and important women in the Old Testament, Sarah, Jochebed, Rahab, Deborah, Ruth, Esther and others. However, I think the point is seen. You're a woman, what can you do? You have so much opportunity for work that you hardly have enough time even ask the question. You, as with the men, have been given special gifts by God to work for Him (**I Peter 4:10**). Use them to serve your brothers and sisters and to glorify God.