

Follow the Example of These Courageous Women of Faith

In the New Testament, we find many women who display aspects of every gift of the Spirit, whether or not they were aware of it.

For example, take the Samaritan woman at the well, whose name is lost to history (see John 4:7-29). Jesus singled her out, and she is considered by many to be the first true evangelist in the Bible.

When she told the townspeople the Good News about the Christ, many of them believed.

Consider Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist and cousin of Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus.

Both of these devout women were active in prayer, worship and faithful waiting on the Lord for the fulfillment of His prophetic promises. The interchange between these God-fearing women resulted in exuberant praises and prophesying concerning the destiny of Mary's child, the Messiah Jesus. The magnificent prophetic exchange that unfolded is recorded in Luke 1:39-55.

In addition to these prophetic songs of Elizabeth and Mary in the first chapter of Luke, we also see mention of a prophetess named Anna in the second chapter:

"And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers" (Luke 2:36-37, NASB1995).

In other words, Anna's prophetic ministry was expressed through intercession. Somehow she had come to know about all of the prophetic promises concerning the Messiah, promises that had not yet been fulfilled.

She was on the lookout for this promised Messiah, the deliverer and hope of Israel. Like Simeon a moment before, Anna's spirit leapt within her when she saw the little bundle in Mary's arms.

This was the one! She blessed Him, knowing that all of the words of the prophets were coming to pass. I love Anna, and I know that women who are prophetic intercessors love her even more.

Other Notable Women Mentioned in the New Testament

We must cast a light on Phillip's four daughters. Phillip, known to us as "the Evangelist," had "four virgin daughters who were prophetesses" (Acts 21:9).

Apparently all four of Phillip's unmarried daughters had been acknowledged by the local body of believers as having prophetic gifts. We do not know any words or actions specifically attributed to them, but surely the term "prophetesses" must have been well-deserved.

Sometimes I think God plays favorites, and Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" were surely among them. Those two women arrived first at the empty tomb; were the first to hear the words, "He is risen"; and the first to announce His resurrection (see Matt. 28:1-10). Their unwavering loyalty and faith put them in the forefront of prophetic fulfillment.

The Holy Spirit also highlights a distinct woman in the marketplace—a prominent lady named Lydia, the well-to-do businesswoman from the city of Thyatira in modern-day Turkey. Her conversion outside the Macedonian city of Philippi and subsequent outreach opened the door to the gospel of the

kingdom throughout Europe (see Acts 16:14–15). She is considered the first convert in Europe, since she lived and worked far to the west and north of the rest of the Middle East and Asia.

Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned in several places in the book of Acts and also in Paul's letters to the Romans, the Corinthians and Timothy. Like Paul, they worked as tentmakers, but they were a husband-and-wife team evidently explaining the gospel message with exceptional clarity, moving from Rome to Corinth to Ephesus and elsewhere as the Spirit of God led them. (See Acts 18:1-3,18-19, 24-26; Rom. 16:3-4; 1 Cor. 16:19; and 2 Tim. 4:19.)

Some commentators note the fact that Priscilla's name is almost always mentioned first which was as unusual then as it is now. This may indicate that she was the most engaging teacher of the pair, the one who brought the Word to life as not many other men or women could do.

Phoebe, an early deaconess in the growing church at Cenchrea, was well known for her servant's heart and her works of mercy (see Rom. 16:1). And Chloe hosted a church in her own home (see 1 Cor. 1:11). It is difficult to tell if she was simply the homeowner-hostess or actually the pastor of the house church.

The listing of the name Junia—or Junias, as some translators prefer—in Romans 16:7 has caused a lot of controversy over the years. Was this person male or female? If female, was she actually considered an apostle, with all the implications raised by such an unusual role, or was she possibly married to Andronicus, the name listed right before hers, and thus serving alongside him as Priscilla and Aquila did together?

My point in cataloging so many of the women in the Bible is not to declare that all of them were prophetic in the narrowest definition of the term, but rather to highlight the

idea that women have always been gifted to serve God's people in the same ways as men.{eoa}

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