

WOMEN IN
THE BIBLE:
PHOEBE
AND ME

A HELPER, A PROTECTOR



9

LESSON

WOMEN IN THE BIBLE: PHOEBE AND ME

INTRODUCTION

Not much is known about Phoebe; only two verses mention her. But even from these two verses we can glean much information.

Phoebe was a sister in the early church. She lived in the port city of Cenchrea. Paul describes her as a “helper” and “servant.” The Greek word here translated *servant* is *diakonos*, meaning “deacon” (masculine gender). This suggests that a deacon could be a man or a woman. Obviously, Phoebe was a woman who was involved in her church and held a position of note. It is thought that Paul trusted her to take this letter, the book of Romans, to the church members in Rome.

The word *helper* that Paul uses in verse 2 could also be translated “patron” or “benefactor,” which indicates that she was a woman of means, or wealth. We can infer that she was on a business trip to Rome, and Paul asked the brothers and sisters in Rome to help her in whatever way they could. Obviously Paul was quite impressed by Phoebe. Here was a woman who most likely had servants to meet her needs but was also willing to serve.

DISCOVER

- * Her Importance
- * The Warmth of Her Character
- * Her Role as a Servant of Christ

GOING DEEPER

1. Paul commends Phoebe to the believers in Rome. How important is this commendation? (Romans 16:1)
2. What does this reveal about Paul’s attitude toward her as a person of worth?
3. Why do you think Paul refers to Phoebe as “our sister”?

Note: Today we also call our fellow Christians “sisters” and “brothers,” indicating that we all belong to the family of God.

4. What adjective does Paul use to describe Phoebe? (Verse 1)
5. What instructions did Paul give as to how the church at Rome should receive Phoebe? What reason did he give? (Verse 2, first part)

PHOEBE

HER NAME MEANS "LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

KEY SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 16:1, 2

6. Do the words of Paul indicate that the believers were to be hospitable?

WORDS FOR TODAY

7. The Greek word *prostatis*, here translated *succourer*, means "benefactor," or "assistant," and expresses the idea of a good friend. What does it mean to be a succourer of many?

8. How can we develop these desirable traits of being a succourer, helper, or protector in our everyday lives? Why is it important for us as Christians to be helpful in every way possible?

9. What are some specific things each one of us can do to be helpful, as we seek to emulate the life of Phoebe?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is it possible for everyone to become a helper or protector? Or is this a gift that some have, whereas someone else may have other gifts?

2. The literal translation of the word servant is "deacon." This suggests that Phoebe held an office in the church. How does this relate to other passages by Paul which some say mean that women should hold no church office, or only minor positions?

WORDS OF WISDOM

In Matthew 25:35-40, Jesus told His disciples that when they visited those in prison, fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, it was as if they had done it for Him. In verse 34 He gives the promise that those who have served Him in this way will be granted a place in heaven with Him. What a blessed promise Jesus made to all who follow Him. When we do His will by caring for the weak, the neglected, the outcasts who need our help, He is pleased and will welcome us home with Him.

Notes:

MY PRAYER FOR TODAY

Our loving God, thank You for the story of Phoebe. May I also be a helper and an assistant to both my fellow believers and those who are forgotten and needy, as I strive to do Your will and tell the world of Your love for each of us.

SHARING

We too may emulate Phoebe as we become trustworthy, faithful individuals who demonstrate the gospel to our friends, families, and community. Following her example, we may also serve faithfully in church office.

Does my church have a prison ministry? a community service outreach? literacy classes? a food bank? an after-school tutoring program? a “welcome baby” ministry? Which of these could we start? Which would best fill a community need?



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