

Discipleship and Women in Ministry (Lk 8:1-3)

Please turn to Lk 8. This morning we continue a mini-series on discipleship. We started last month with *make disciples, follow me*, and what a disciple is

- Lk 9:23: one who denies self and takes up cross daily (death to self)
- disciples continue in Word, love like Jesus, bear fruit (Jn 8, 13, 15)
- baptism=1st step of discipleship (8/5), then communion (did today)
- **Challenge:** are you a disciple as Jesus defined His? Baptized since?

Last time: committing to Jesus' church (membership, worship, fellowship).

- **Challenge:** if you've never publically committed to the church as a member, as the elders desire, if you ask 'why, do I have to?', I'd ask 'do you *want to* be all in and commit to following God's commands together at this church? If not, why not?' As I said last time, if your struggle is going on stage for some reason but you want to commit to or talk to elders on a question you have, let us know after service.

Today: Discipleship and Women in Ministry (tonight specifically pastoral ministry as we prepare for member vote on decision for a 3rd staff pastor).

You need to be here tonight if you can if you care about our church's future.

Challenge: Tonight we decide on a man for full-time ministry to help Cliff and myself in the church office, this morning a question to challenge you: Is the Christian ministry open to women and men? Should there be female ministers? Does God call women to the ministry? I see the NT answer is yes

Eph 4:11-12 says the Lord gave pastors and teachers to equip the believers, including women, to do '*the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ*' and v. 16 says '*each part...working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*' Every part of the body is to do ministry, it isn't the pastors and teachers who are *the* ministers, in biblical terminology, women and men and young people are all ministers of their local church. In NT language, the work of ministry is building up or serving (the different translations use minister or serve interchangeably, ministry is just service). Christian discipleship is helping others think like Christ and be like Christ.

[[women-to-women, men-to-men, more on that in the future](#)]

In Luke 7-8 we see Him accept women in ministry, not as rabbis or pastors (pastor means shepherd-leader) but ministry service in supporting His work. A few *men* do *pastoral* ministry, but all Christian women are to do ministry. I want to start reading in context in chapter 7 where a Pharisee by the name of Simon invited Jesus to a meal at his house. A woman came in and began to minister to the Lord's needs, and in v. 39 the Pharisee was offended by it.

End of v. 39 scoffs ‘she is a sinner’ (end of v. 34 Jesus as *friend of sinners*). But Jesus didn’t see her sinful past or her sex as a disqualifier from serving Him. He saw and spoke highly of her heart, loving humble repentant faith. Jesus used this woman’s ministry as a rebuke to a man’s failure to minister.

In v. 44 Jesus ‘turning toward the woman...said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered **your** house; **you** gave me no water for my feet, but **she** has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.⁴⁵ **You** gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in **she** has not ceased to kiss my feet.⁴⁶ **You** did not anoint my head with oil, but **she** has anointed my feet with ointment.⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, **her** sins, which are many, are forgiven—for **she** loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”⁴⁸ And he said to **her**, “Your sins are forgiven.”⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”⁵⁰ And he said to **the woman**, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

8:1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others who provided for them [KJV ‘ministered to him’ and other translations say their women’s ministry was ‘helping to support’].

Let’s pray. Our Father in heaven, holy be your name, but we are unholy sinners, and our sins are many. Your kingdom come, bring the good news of your kingdom by the proclamation of your Word. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Help us to see heaven’s view of women and your will for them in ministry and your kingdom purposes. Forgive us our sins and like this woman may we see our need to be forgiven so we’ll love you much. Lead us away from temptations of wrong thinking, deliver us from evil by helping us view sisters in Christ like He does in this gospel, and may we all fall at His feet. This I pray in the name of the Friend of Sinners, amen

‘He was a big man, 6’4” or more, at one time over 300 lbs...He had a big voice. Metropolitan opera people invited him to New York to sing. He had big talents. The world’s largest seminary invited him to teach. Conference centers waited for him to come and direct...music as well as teach. The largest religious publishing house in Protestantism hired him as a worldwide consultant. But Sibley Burnet ignored all that. He lived by his favorite phrase, “A man is biggest of all when he stoops to help a child.”

...He gave up his goal of seminary teaching. He limited his conferences. He devoted himself to one thing—teaching children and teaching people how to teach children...the happiest days of his life...he stood before a V.B.S.¹

I thought that a fitting place to start, as we ended Vacation Bible School on Friday, to remind us all: big ministry isn't a big guy preaching to big groups of men and women, to Jesus, no ministry is bigger or better than stooping to serve and to help little ones. Not everyone is gifted to teach kids, few are called to preach to adults on the Lord's Day, but the greatest of all came from heaven to stoop to serve all. In fact, the Greek word at the end of Lk 8:3 for how these women ministered to provide for the Lord's work is the same word He used when He said '*the Son of man came to serve*' Mk 10:35

Noun form in Rom 16:1: '*I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is also a minister of the church*' (NAB). In Lk 9:48 Jesus said to men '*Whoever receives/welcomes this child in my name receives/welcomes me ... For he who is least among you all is the one who is great.*' That's greatness in God's sight, and a ministry many of you did all week, big-time ministry. As I minister in speaking I want to encourage your ministry in serving. Jesus said those who give a cup of cold water to a little one because they are His disciples will be rewarded (Mt 10:42). Many of you ladies, young people, some guys did that this past week, you moms do that every week with your little ones at home did that – don't let anyone tell you that's unimportant or that you need an important role on stage or as a speaker to men to be great. If your heart is right in serving, it's rewarding and can be your happiest day.

In the Lord's eyes, the ministry of women is no less valuable. The Lord has different roles for male/female (I'm not called to be a mom, ask my kids!). Only 1% or less of you guys here will be called minister the Word from the pulpit on a Sunday morning, but 100% of Christians are called to minister in other ways and on other days. Luke 8:1-3 gives us some great examples of women who were seen as least by ancient society who were great to God. Ladies with infirmities, disabilities, or demons were saved and greatly used. This text highlights to us the high calling of women in the Lord's ministry.

If you're a note-taker, notice first: Jesus ministered to women disciples

In the end of chapter 7 Jesus ministered to this sinful woman forgiveness of her sins as she was at His feet. That was the place of a disciple, at the feet of the rabbi. Many men were superficial followers, but not her, she falls at His feet, weeping, and He saw her heart weeping over her sin in true faith, v. 50

The male host hadn't washed Jesus' feet before dinner (and neither did the male disciples in the upper room, Jesus ministered to them in that way in a servant's posture). v. 37 says Jesus was reclining at the table, men literally laid on the floor to eat at a low table and servants would come behind. This woman in v. 38 comes behind Jesus, taking the role of a servant, washing His feet with tears and using her hair as the towel. In v. 45-46 Jesus rebukes the man, the offended fundamentalist who was too proud to serve and hadn't greeted Jesus with a customary Middle Eastern kiss on the cheek or anointed His head with common oil. *She* humbly anoints His feet with precious costly ointment, keeps kissing His feet, wanting to stay at His feet in lowly service. *She* loved much, in contrast to the legalist religionist men.

In v. 50 in the presence of unsaved men, it says Jesus '*said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you..."*' These men denigrated her for her sin, but He elevated her for her service, and women like her. She emulated the way Jesus Himself served His disciples by washing their feet, weeping over their sin, but He wiped sin away as He poured Himself out as a fragrant offering. Ps 2 commands all: '*Serve the Lord...Kiss the Son...*' Or like Lk 7, kiss the Son's feet and lovingly serve Him in humble repentant faith. That's where discipleship or following Jesus starts for women or men or youth. Jesus said in another text '*if anyone serves me, he must follow me*' (Jn 12:26). Do you?

[\[if not, fall at His feet in faith as Savior, then follow Him as Lord\]](#)

That word 'serve' in that text is the same word used of the ladies following Jesus in Luke 8:3 in the original language. The clear implication is the Lord not only had male followers, but female followers. That may be no big deal to you, but this was a huge deal in 1st century Judaism! This was unheard of for a rabbi to have female disciples, to minister in teaching equally to them. The first lady mentioned in v. 2, '*Mary, called Magdalene,*' called Jesus her rabbi after the resurrection. She had a special rabbi-disciple relationship and He ministered to her in a special way as she was weeping at the empty tomb and thinking a gardener was speaking until He said '*Mary.*' She turned and said in the Jewish dialect '*Rabonni/my Rabbi!*' He was hers and she was His

That day the risen Lord appeared first to her and called her to share that good news with the brothers. He called her to proclaim the good news to the men who would proclaim it to the church in Acts. End of v. 1 mentions '*the twelve,*' that's the male apostles Jesus chose and told to preach in chapter 9. For that He chose only men. Scripture calls men to ministries of leading and speaking sermons to *His gathered church* in the book of Acts and the rest of the NT, but Luke 8:2-3 reminds us women ministered to the apostles as well

In Lk 10 Jesus commands Mary from Judea for sitting at His feet to hear His teaching, that was the place and position of a disciple before a rabbi (as Saul of Tarsus sat as a disciple at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel). Sister Martha thought her place should be in the kitchen, not sitting as a disciple to listen to teaching (especially leaving the cultural ‘women’s work’ to her!). But the Lord said her sitting at His feet as a disciple was a right and good choice not to be taken away. Acts 9 uses a female form of *disciple* for another, Tabitha.

Modern feminists cry discrimination if there aren’t female *rabbis to male disciples*, or gals *over guys in a church*, as if equality requires girls on top?

But they miss Jesus brought to women *as disciples* a revolutionary equality!

- *Reformation Study Bible* note on Lk 8:3: ‘Rabbis refused to teach women’

- R. Eliezer ‘burn the teaching of Torah rather than convey them to women’²

- *Bible Background Commentary*: ‘Adult coeducation was unheard of, and that...women are learning Jesus’ teaching as closely as his male disciples ... travel[ing] with the group would have been viewed as scandalous’³

- They had heard it said ‘Talk not much with womankind’ (Rabbi Johanan quoted in Talmud) but Rabbi Jesus talked much with and taught them much

Josephus, a 1st century Jew: ‘let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex’ (*Antiquities*, 4.219). But the Jewish Messiah chose Mary Magdalene and Joanna from Luke 8 and other women to be the first witnesses of His resurrection, and to bear testimony to the male disciples, even though they wouldn’t believe them as Luke 24 says

Josephus said 1st century Jewish interpretation of the law ‘holds women to be inferior in all matters’ (*Ag. ap.* 2.25, 201), but Jesus the true Lawgiver holds up women as having equal value, and in some matters ladies were spiritually superior to religious guys (like Luke 7, Pharisee vs. the woman).

Dictionary of NT Background says in synagogues ‘women could not qualify as constituting members.’ [But Jesus speaks of women as full members of His kingdom, and church to come. In the Greek world] ‘Conversation with males outside the family was forbidden to citizen-class women, and even communication between spouses was limited. Thus the verbal exchange between the Greek woman [in Mk 7] and Jesus is all the more remarkable’⁴

Jn 4: ‘*His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman*’ (v. 27 NKJV). Jesus not only talked with, He revealed His identity to her first and she became His evangelist in Samaria before men did. In a world that looked down on women, Jesus lifted up and ministered to women disciples!

2nd part in Lk 8, application: the Lord's work needs women in ministry

v. 2 says with Jesus were ‘*some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their means.*

Let’s take a closer look at these women’s identity, diversity, and ministries.

THEIR IDENTITY - the unnamed woman from chapter 7 had a past and it may be she was part of the ‘many others’ mentioned who ministered to the Lord’s work out of their means. She evidently had some means, an alabaster flask of precious oil ointment wasn’t cheap. Some think she had prostitution in her past, the text doesn’t say that, but her reputation was a ‘sinner’ (7:39). Jesus affirmed her sins were many but that she was forgiven and saved by faith. That was her new identity. Her past didn’t define her or disqualify her

Lk 8:2 lists multiple ladies who had *infirmities*, that’s the word Jesus used in Lk 13:12 ‘*Woman, you are freed from your disability!*’ Jesus freed ladies from the limitations of their infirmities or inabilities. It’s the word almost always translated ‘weakness’ – Christ’s ministry team He chose from weak women whom He healed and helped so they could help others. His ‘*strength is made perfect in weakness,*’ Paul says I’ll ‘*boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities... for Christ’s sake...*’ (2 Cor 12:9-10 NKJV). Men and women who’ve known infirmity can be effective in ministry when they find identity and strength in Christ. The same word for weakness these women had is used in Heb 4:15 for Christ Himself our High Priest able ‘*to sympathize with our weakness...*’

If you have weakness or infirmity or a sinful past, be encouraged sister, the Lord can use you and calls people just like you (and guys like that, too) to display His power. Our Savior can free you from whatever limitations you or the world puts on you, He can forgive whatever you’ve done and give you a new identity and calling to share His gospel with others. Women and men, boy and girls, look to Jesus! Behold the glories of Christ and be changed in the way you think and live. Fix your eyes on Jesus who knows your weaknesses but can overcome them and strengthen you to serve. He knows your sin and if you own it and come humbly to Him He’ll lift you up

Lk 8:2 also mentions the women who ministered to Jesus had evil spirits in their past and Mary had 7 demons. Would we choose a leader of women on a ministry support staff someone who months earlier was filled with devils?

Mary Magdalene is listed first of the women ministering to Jesus here and in 8 other passages, she seems the clear leader among them. Jesus chose her to be the first among all His disciples to see His risen glory, and she and the other ladies had great joy as they told the disciples the good news (Mt 28:8).

³ *and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna*
... More on Joanna in a minute, Susanna isn't in any other verse, we know nothing about her but the Lord knew her and His people she served, and that's what matters. That should encourage others serving Jesus who aren't well-known but to whom Jesus will say *well done, good and faithful servant*

Their IDENTITY: disciples in Christ, but think also of their DIVERSITY.
These were ladies that wouldn't have naturally hung out. The other lists add Salome, the wife of a fisherman from Galilee, along with political first lady Joanna, and prostitutes who believed (Mt 21:32). A Samaritan woman who believed and Canaanite woman who Jesus said had great faith (Mt 15:22) became part of the family of faith with Jews. A synagogue leader's wife and a woman caught in adultery wouldn't be FB friends today, nor widows with lepers, the ceremonially unclean, the crippled, the poor with the rich. The end of Lk 8:3 suggests ladies of wealth financially supported the 12 men (another unlikely bunch, former publican, radical zealot, fishermen, Peter). But Jesus delights to have a diversity serve where He's the only explanation

And if v. 2 was surprising with a woman recently demon-possessed leading the ladies list, v. 3 may have been just as much or more surprising as Joanna was married to a man in a very wicked government. Herod was the king who beheaded John the Baptist (chap. 9). A top high-ranking official in that administration had a wife in that pagan palace who was a Christ-follower! Herod was the son of the king killing Bethlehem's babies, this is the guy offering a decapitated head on a party platter, his chief guy's wife is saved! Joanna with Mary heard the angel say '*He is not here, He is risen!*' (Lk 24).

It should encourage us that even in the diabolical dynasty of Herods, Christ has His elect! And Acts 13:1 says in the leadership of the church in Antioch there was a man from North Africa, another nicknamed "black" (probably for his dark skin) and Manaen, Herod's foster-brother was a church leader! Remember in the end of Phil 4, even Nero Caesar's household had saints in it. The later Emperor Diocletian even had a Christ-following wife 'Serena the empress who was therefore martyred...Elizabeth, Queen of Denmark; of whom Luther [said] she died a faithful professor of the reformed religion.'⁵

Women in the gospel are a rich DIVERSITY, I close with their MINISTRY

End of Lk 8:3 in KJV says they ‘*ministered*’; another version ‘*contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples*’ (NLT). In their case they ministered by giving to provide for the needs of the Lord’s work. Joanna’s husband as the king’s manager would have had means, and others in the NT like Lydia and Phoebe used their rich resources for the church. In later church history, Selena Hastings, wife of the Earl of Huntington was a financer of many chapels and preachers like Whitefield. Lady Armyne was a wealthy English Christian who gave generously to New England missions. Lady Glenorchy in Scotland gave greatly to train ministers there, and more.

The Lord’s work can’t go on humanly speaking without financial support of faithful ladies like these scripture honors, as well as men and young people. How are you giving to support the gospel advancing here and to the world? But that word the ESV translates ‘*provided*’ goes beyond monetarily in the NT. This does remind us of the importance of giving to support the ministry and that giving is itself a ministry, and the Lord’s work in a local church or for international missions depends on giving. But think time and talent also. In the OT Exodus 38:8 mentions ‘*ministering women who ministered in the entrance of the tent of meeting.*’ In the NT temple, Lk 2 mentions a widow at least 84 years old named Anna who ‘*never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers,*’ she saw Jesus ‘*and continued to speak of Him to all*’ (v. 37-38 NAS). At the start and end of Luke’s gospel there’s women speaking of Christ to all, an evangelistic ministry for every believer.

Matthew’s gospel uses this same word in the original language for ‘*many women...who had followed Jesus...ministering to him*’ (Mt 27:55). It’s used of angels ministering to Jesus (Mt 4:11), there’s no higher service than that! It’s also used of Peter’s mother-in-law Jesus healed and immediately she is ministering to Christ’s needs (Mt 8:15). It’s used of Martha ministering by making Him a meal (Jn 12:2). We don’t live in time where we can minister to Jesus personally, or can we? This same word for *minister* in Lk 8:3 Jesus used for those who will ask Him ‘*Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?*’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘*Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.*’ (Mt 25:44-45).

In a real sense we can minister to the Lord in what we do to the least of His. Giving to benevolence, blanket drive, visiting the sick, being hospitable to a stranger, meeting tangible needs, making meals, is ministry for *and to* Jesus.

If you'd like to be a part of those kinds of ministries, talk to Donna Hall or Linda Cain on women's ministries, or visit the kiosk for more information on, or guys talk to our deacons about ways you can minister meeting needs by your gifts. We can all learn from these women in the gospels ministering to the Lord. May Christ grow us to be more Christlike in how we view our sisters in Christ and how we all use our gifts to serve to the glory of Christ.

The disciple Peter may have been thinking of the ladies in Lk 8 as he wrote: *Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms...If anyone serves [same as word for how the women ministered in Lk 8]...do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen* (1 Peter 4 NIV). If you like those ladies have past sin or a present infirmity or weakness, sing:

Jesus! what a strength in weakness! Let me hide myself in Him;
Tempted, tried, and sometimes failing, He, my strength, my vict'ry wins.
Hallelujah! What a Savior! [to Him be the glory forever, amen?!]

Discipleship is about helping others become more like our Savior in how we think and live, not being conformed to this world's way of thinking (for this subject we have the radical feminists on one side or strict patriarchy Christian men on the other, but we need the mind of Christ in the gospels). Scripture says we must instead be transformed by the renewal of our minds, that's critical to being more conformed in Christlikeness. Behold the glory of Christ relating to women and to all people and be changed into His image

Lk 7:34 says '*look him...a friend of...sinners,*' some said it self-righteously sarcastically, we can see sweetly that's who He is! We started with a sinner in Lk 7 who probably had friends turn against her, along with religious foes.

But she could sing: Jesus! what a friend for sinners! Jesus! lover of my soul;
Friends may fail me, foes assail me, He, my Savior, makes me whole...
Jesus! I do now receive Him, More than all in Him I find,
He hath granted me forgiveness, I am His, and He is mine.
Hallelujah! what a Savior! Hallelujah! what a friend!
Saving, helping, keeping, loving, He is with me to the end.

¹ Trent C. Butler, [*Luke*](#), vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 121.

² Sue Poorman Richards and Larry Richards, [*Every Woman in the Bible*](#) (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson Publishers, 1999), 158.

³ Craig S. Keener, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Lk 8:1–3.

⁴ Catherine C. Kroeger, “[*Women in Greco-Roman World and Judaism*](#),” *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1277.

⁵ John Trapp, [*Trapp's Annotations on the Old and New Testaments*](#), n.d., Lk 8:3.