

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"

Our Small Group Women's Bible Study studied fascinating women from the Old Testament last fall. This spring we are looking at, and learning from, "Fascinating Women of the Word in the New Testament". We will meet at Oasis Church, twice a month on Wednesdays from 1:00-2:30pm.

Eight-Week Study - Dates and Topics:

March 30 - Elizabeth & Anna

April 13 - The Virgin Mary

April 27 - Martha & Mary

May 11 - Mary Magdalene

May 25 - Outcasts & Untouchables

June 8 - Dorcas & Lydia

June 15 - Phoebe, Priscilla & Philip's Daughters

June 29 - Lois & Eunice

Session One: Today we visit Elizabeth and Anna.

Read Luke 1:5-7. What do we know about Elizabeth? Elizabeth is *Eli-sheba*. Her name means "God's promise", or "my God is generous". She was married, advanced in age, and barren. She was also a kinswoman (cousin) of Mary, the mother of our Lord. She and her husband Zechariah lived in the village of Ein Karem, situated on the western slopes of Jerusalem. Elizabeth was the daughter of a priestly family (Aaron) and her husband was a priest from the family of Abijah (Nehemiah 12:4, 7). Both are describe by St. Luke as being righteous and walking blameless. What does it mean to be righteous and blameless? Why are Elizabeth and Zechariah childless? In biblical times, childlessness was not just a misfortune, it was a disgrace, a stigma (see Genesis 16:4, 11; 29:32; 30:1, I Samuel 1:5-6, 11, 2:5, 7-8). "Being old is a biblical mark of pride, but when *barren* is added to such vintage wine, it tastes as bitter as vinegar." Elizabeth and Zechariah are not barren because of Divine disfavor. Perhaps, like Sarah (Genesis 18:11) and Hannah (I Samuel 1-2), Elizabeth remained barren because God had a greater plan for her. Her barren state would heighten the sense that her impending pregnancy was a miracle. Do we see children as a blessing from God or as entitlement?

Read Luke 1:8-25. Zechariah's priestly section was taking its turn to offer sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem. Although the Jewish people were under Roman occupation, they enjoyed a high degree of religious freedom. Temple worship was sanctioned, as long as it did not hide or encourage rebellion. Zechariah had been chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Temple and offer incense as part of the daily worship at the Temple. Only the single priest who had been chosen by random lot, and therefore by God's hand, could enter the sanctuary. Drawing lots was not a matter of luck or chance. It was Divine appointment. This was a pivotal moment for Zechariah. A large number of priests, about 8,000 at that time, meant that any one priest could only expect to offer sacrifice once or twice in his lifetime. Now it was Zechariah's moment. What happens in the Temple? The Angel of the Lord (Gabriel) tells Zechariah that his prayers have been answered. He and Elizabeth will finally have a son and the boy's name will be John (God is gracious; the Lord has shown favor). John will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even while in his mother's womb. God has some BIG PLANS (a special calling) for John. John will prepare the way of the Lord. He will be a forerunner of Messiah (in the spirit and power of Elijah). What sign is Zechariah given, guaranteeing that the promise is true? MUTENESS. Zechariah finishes his priestly duties (1-2 weeks) and then returns home. Elizabeth conceives. Why does she remain hidden for five months? Did husband and wife communicate with charades?

Read Luke 1:26-38. In the SIXTH MONTH of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the Angel Gabriel visits Mary and announces her Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth of Jesus. The sign given to Mary is a pregnant Elizabeth. **Read Luke 1:39-45.** What does Mary immediately do? How do John and Elizabeth both bear witness to Messiah Jesus? What does it mean to be blessed? Mary sings her song of praise (*Magnificat*) and then remains with Elizabeth for 3 months. **Read Luke 1:57-66.** What is the significance of naming the child John? How did you decide what to name or call your child? Did you seek God's guidance? Have you considered what divine destiny your child is called to fulfill? Zechariah sings his *Benedictus* (Luke 1:67-79). How might our children be servants of salvation?

Read Luke 2:22-38. Anna, the name means "favor or grace". Anna is the same name as Hannah (I Samuel 1:20). Only three verses in the Bible are attributed to Anna. Anna was chaste before marriage and after she became a widow. Anna was at least 84 years old (or widowed for 84 years; thus 104?). The allowable age for girls to marry was 12.5 years. Anna never left the Temple (Court of Women), worshipping night and day, fasting and praying. Anna didn't actually sleep in the Temple. Only Levites and Priests could do that. She kept all the prayer hours. She was the first to get to church and the last to leave. If we spend a lot of time in church, people may accuse us of living there. Providence brings Anna to the Temple precisely when Jesus arrives. Keeping a regular worship practice guaranteed that she wouldn't miss something big when it happened. Why and how is regular worship and prayer important and necessary for us? We picture Anna almost like a cloistered nun. Unlike most women of her time, Anna chose a different path. Widowed after only 7 years of marriage, she chose not to remarry. Being a widow, Anna had to rely on others to feed and clothe her. She trusted God. She dedicated her entire life to God. Anna may have spent 60 plus years in the Temple. She served the Lord and shared the faith of Israel with others. Messiah was coming. Promises would be kept. Anna's calling as a prophetess (Miriam and Deborah) was to preach the Word of God to all who would listen.

Simeon and Anna witnessed the dedication of Jesus and the purification of Mary (February 2). New mothers were required to present a sacrifice for their purification 40 days after birth if the child was male and 80 days after birth if the child was a girl (Leviticus 12:8). The Law allowed the poor to provide two turtledoves/pigeons instead of a costly lamb. Simeon takes Jesus in his arms. He blesses God, and then blesses Joseph and Mary. Simeon also prophesies: "This child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel. A sword will pierce Mary's soul. Hearts will be revealed." Before the Infancy narrative ends, the cross begins to loom. Anna must have heard Simeon's blessing. Simeon praises God for allowing him to see Messiah Jesus before he dies. Simeon sings his Nunc Dimittis. Anna thanks God and then "speaks about the child to all who are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." Her audience would have included devout Jews milling around the Temple and Courtyard. Who is our audience? Who do we know that is looking for redemption and consolation? How much of our lives have we dedicated to God? Perhaps the good news caused Anna to leave the Temple and enter the city. Since our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit, how might we be portable worship spaces for the proclamation of Jesus?

Final Thoughts: Do you believe that you are blessed? What are some of God's big plans for you? How has being active in worship changed your life? What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you? What can Anna teach us about how to live with loss and how to grieve with hope? How much of our lives will we dedicate to God? Simeon and Anna lived by promise. What is it that you would like to see before tasting death (Joey Feek's father got saved shortly before she died)? What is it that Elizabeth and Anna have taught you? May God grant us grace to sing our Lord's praise until our lips are silenced by the grave! Next Session: April 13 - The Virgin Mary.

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"

Wednesday, April 13, 2016 – 1:00 p.m.

Session Two: Today we visit the Virgin Mary. The name Mary may mean "BITTER".

Review: Highlights from Session One

1. Elizabeth: "God's promise", or "my God is generous". She was married, advanced in age, and barren. She was married to Zechariah and both are described as righteous and blameless.
2. Nugget: God has heard their prayers. What were Elizabeth and Zechariah praying for in old age?
3. Elizabeth's pregnancy is a sign to Mary that God's WORD of promise is trustworthy and true. Why is the choice of a child's name so important? What does John's witness from the womb say about the sanctity of life?
4. Anna (Hannah): "favor or grace". Anna was a widow & a prophetess, who never left the Temple, praying and fasting daily. She is at least 84 years old; perhaps 12.5 (legal age for marriage) + 7 (years married) + 84 (years as a widow) = 103 years+.
5. What can Elizabeth teach us about patience and Divine providence? What can Anna teach us about how to live with loss, and how to grieve with hope?

Luke 1:26-38. In the SIXTH MONTH of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the Angel Gabriel visits Mary and announces her Immaculate (sinless) Conception and the Virgin Birth of Jesus. The sign given to Mary is a pregnant Elizabeth. What is it about Angel Gabriel's greeting (1:28) that troubles Mary? Gabriel tells Mary not to be afraid. What would Mary have had to be afraid of? Three miracles: Immaculate Conception; Virgin Birth; and Mary Believed. Martin Luther said that the greatest miracle was FAITH. Do you believe that NOTHING will be impossible with God?

Luke 1:46-56. Mary visits Elizabeth and gets confirmation that she is indeed the servant (handmaid) of the Lord. Why/How would Mary have found comfort in the presence of her cousin Elizabeth? What is it that surprises you about Mary's Song (*The Magnificat*)? What is good news about exalting the humble and sending the rich away empty? Mary stays with Elizabeth for three months and then returns to Nazareth, where Joseph awaits his bride after receiving an angelic visit of his own. Scripture says that they don't consummate their marriage until after Jesus is born.

Luke 2:1-52. The Christmas Story. Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem? What do you imagine must have been going through Mary's mind during her pregnancy and delivery? The shepherds are the first to hear the good news, and to witness (to) the birth of Messiah. What does it mean that Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart? The child is named Jesus (The Lord Saves) as was

instructed by the angel to Mary at the time of the Annunciation. Joseph and Mary are Law-abiding Jews. Jesus is circumcised on the 8th day. Jesus is presented and Mary is purified on the 40th day. See Leviticus 12:8 (“every male that first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”). Simeon sings his Nunc Dimittis and announces that Jesus will be opposed, reveal the thoughts of many hearts, and cause the fall and rising of many in Israel. A sword will pierce Mary’s soul also. Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth of Galilee. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom and the favor of God was upon Him. What happened when Jesus was 12 years old? What does this story reveal about Paternity and “my Father’s house”? Read Luke 3:23 and 38. What does the genealogy of Jesus tell us about His Paternity?

Read Luke 8:19-21; 11:27-28. What do these verses tell us about Mary and Jesus’ family? Why is Joseph, not mentioned after the infancy narratives? How does Jesus redefine family?

Read John 2:1-12 and John 19:25-27. Jesus’ first sign/miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. What role does Mary play in this Divine act? While Jesus is dying on the cross for the redemption of all creation, he also transacts an adoption. Describe what Jesus is doing for the Beloved Disciple & his mother Mary. How hard must it be for a mother to stand with her son and watch him die? What does the scene at the cross tell us about the relationship between mother and son?

Final Thoughts: Betrothed to Joseph, Mary is contractually bound to him. Only a divorce can cancel this covenant once the Bride Price has been paid. Joseph may have been a widow, perhaps a dozen years or so older than Mary. Joseph was probably a common laborer (building with stone rather than wood). This is a poor couple, but they are God’s choice. Mary is honored not only as the mother of our Lord, but also as his first disciple. Though Scripture is silent regarding Mary’s parents, tradition says that their names were Joachim and Anna. Papal decrees tell us that Mary was sinless and forever a virgin. The Gospel of Matthew varies from St. Luke. According to Matthew, Magi visit Jesus when Mary and Joseph are in a house in Bethlehem. An angel warns Joseph to take his family to Egypt because Herod is seeking to kill Messiah Jesus (the slaughter of the Holy Innocents). Prophecy is fulfilled: a sword pierces Mary’s soul. The last time we see Mary is in Acts 1:14, after Jesus’ ascension. Mary realizes that discipleship must supersede motherhood. Numbered among the 120, Mary is filled with the Pentecost Spirit and becomes a witness of the Resurrection. What do you make of the veneration of Mary by some Christians (Mariology)? Would Mary approve of her elevated status by some Christians (e.g. “Hail Mary full of grace”)? From antiquity, Mary has been called "Theotokos" (Greek word), or "God-Bearer" (Mother of God). The term was used as part of the popular piety of the early first millennium church. It is used throughout the Eastern Church's Liturgy, both Orthodox and Catholic.

Next Session: April 27 – Martha & Mary: Bethany sisters of Lazarus.

Luke 2:22 – When the time came for their purification. See Leviticus 12. Forty days after giving birth if the child was a boy. Pair of Turtle Doves (or two young pigeons) suggests that Jesus' parents were poor. See Leviticus 12:8. Jesus is brought to the Temple for presentation (every male that first opens the womb shall be called "holy to the Lord"). Simeon was in Jerusalem (devout and righteous) who was waiting for the consolation of Israel (the Lord's salvation). The Holy Spirit was upon him! The Holy Spirit revealed that he would not see death until he first saw the promised Messiah. Notice how Divine providence works. Simeon enters the Temple at the same time as by Jesus. Not just luck or chance. This is orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. Setting: probably in the Court of Women. See Picture of Herod's Temple (20BC-70AD).

Simeon's song (Simeon is God's Servant announcing that he has seen with his own eyes the gift of salvation) is a part of our liturgy. Simeon takes Jesus in his arms. Blesses God. Then blesses Joseph and Mary. Prophecy: This child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel. A sword will pierce Mary's soul. Hearts will be revealed. Before the Infancy narrative ends, the cross begins to loom.

Jesus is presented, not redeemed, on the 40th Day – example, like Samuel by Hannah.

Anna is of the tribe of Asher (i.e. second son born to Leah's maid Zilpah).

Single-minded devotion to God. Who have you known with such a devotion to God?

New mothers were unclean for 80 days if it was a girl and 40 days if it was a boy.

Phan'u-el means 'face of God'; this may be a play on words, since Anna will be among the first to recognize the face of God when she sees the infant Jesus. Phan'u-el, her husband, was from the tribe of Asher, one of the northern tribes from the so-called ten lost tribes of Israel.

Some women are able to see what is hidden to others. Anna sees.

We are given a surprising amount of detail about Anna. We find out about her tribe and family, and that after seven years of marriage she had become a widow; there is a nice parallel here: the Jewish heroine Judith likewise did not remarry after her husband's death, and lived to be about the same age; her way of life was similar to Anna's. her advanced age; she is an elderly Jewish woman of at least eighty-four years, possibly more.

40th Day = Mary's purification.

What do you remember about Elizabeth? Her husband was Zechariah. Her cousin was Mary, the mother of our Lord. Her son was John the Baptizer.

Elizabeth – Mary traveled down from Galilee to rural Judea (Ein Karem), 3-4 days of travel; perhaps to avoid and HONOR KILLING – shaming her family by being betrothed (bride price paid) and then pregnant.

The two pregnant women met, and at that moment Elizabeth's unborn baby responded by suddenly moving and kicking in her womb. Twenty-eight weeks, the end of a woman's second trimester, is the normal time to expect an unborn baby to kick in the womb, and this may well have been the first time Elizabeth's unborn baby moved - an exciting moment for any mother. She took this sudden movement, at this particular meeting, as a sign.

Elizabeth's pregnancy late in life mirrored Hannah's.

A baby was usually named on the day of his circumcision, and a common practice at this time was to name a first son after his grandfather.

In the Old Testament, God's power is often shown through a woman who prays and gives birth after everyone else has given up hope.

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"
Wednesday, April 27, 2016 – 1:00 p.m. (St. James Coffee)

Session Three: Today we visit Mary and Martha, Bethany women, sisters of Lazarus.

Review: Highlights from Session Two – Mary, the Mother of our Lord

1. Three miracles: Immaculate Conception; Virgin Birth; and Mary Believed. Martin Luther said that the greatest miracle was FAITH. Mary surrenders to the will of the LORD. How shall this be? With God all things are possible.
2. Mary's Song: The Magnificat proclaims the "leveling of the Lord". The mighty are brought low and the humble are exalted. Joseph and Mary are poor.
3. Since Mary is the mother of our Lord, who is Jesus' father? At the birth of Jesus, Mary ponders and treasures all things in her heart.
4. Joseph and Mary are devout, Torah-observing Jews. Jesus is named, circumcised, presented, and celebrates his Bar Mitzvah. Jesus isn't redeemed, because He is the Redeemer.
5. Mary lets Jesus know that the wedding in Cana has hit a major bump in the road: "They have no wine." She tells the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them! Good news! It's the Third Day. The first sign: "And the disciples believed in Him."
6. At the cross, Jesus transacts an adoption between His beloved Disciple and His Mother. A sword, as promised, pierces the soul of Mary. How hard for a mother to watch her son die.
7. After Jesus' ascension, we hear the final mention of Mary (Acts 1:14). Mary realizes that discipleship must supersede motherhood. Numbered among the 120, Mary is filled with the Pentecost Spirit & becomes a witness of the Resurrection.

Luke 10:38-42. Recap: In Luke 9:57, Jesus sets His face (like a flint) toward Jerusalem. He has a non-negotiable appointment with a Good Friday cross. Jesus raises the cost of discipleship and then commissions the 72, sending them out into a plentiful harvest. The 72 report that they saw Satan fall like lightning for heaven. Jesus rejoices in the Father's will & the disciples must rejoice that their names are written in heaven. The Parable of the Good Samaritan precedes our text, and the Lord's Prayer follows. Mary and Martha were beloved friends of Jesus. Martha's spiritual gift is hospitality and welcome. Generosity is second nature to her. What is Mary's spiritual gift? Sitting at the feet of a Rabbi was the posture of a disciple. What is distracting Martha? What is her plea to Jesus? Whenever a name is mentioned twice in a row, something serious (tender affection) is about to be said (heads up!). What does Jesus say is the Good Portion? How secure will it be in the life of a disciple? Did you notice that Jesus compares hearing the Word to eating a meal? Food comes and goes, but God's Word is eternal. Why do you think Mary and Martha never got married? Or do you think they married and were widows living with their brother Lazarus? Did you notice that Scripture refers to the house as Martha's house? When have we sacrificed what is essential (best) for what is important (better)? The temporal is important, but the eternal is essential. The Parable of the Good Samaritan might be captioned: "Don't just

sit there, do something.” The story of Martha & Mary might be captioned: “Don’t just do something, sit there.”

John 11:1-12:8. This familiar story of the raising of Lazarus begins with a reference to Mary, the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive ointment made of pure nard and wiped His feet with her hair (John 12:1-8). Mary and Martha send word to Jesus letting Him know that his beloved friend Lazarus is deathly sick. What does Jesus do when he receives this SOS? He delays two days, and says that this illness is not terminal, but rather an opportunity for God to get glory (belief to happen)! Once Lazarus has passed (fallen asleep) Jesus says that it’s time to head up to Bethany. When Jesus & His disciples arrive, Lazarus has been in the tomb for 4 days. Mary remains in the house & Martha goes out to meet Jesus. What does Martha, and later Mary, say to Jesus? Who is responsible for Lazarus’ death? Jesus offers one of His EGO EIMI (I AM) statements. Martha knows that Lazarus will rise on the last day, but she wants resurrection NOW. What does Martha believe (11:27)? John 11:35 is a short verse. Why does Jesus weep? At the tomb, Jesus orders that the stone be removed. Martha says, “Lord, he stinketh!” Jesus says, “Believe!” Lazarus is raised & unbound. The Jewish opposition will put a contact out on Jesus’ and Lazarus’ lives. Jesus leaves for Ephraim, a town northwest of Jericho. Six days before Passover, Jesus returns to Bethany. Why did Martha and Mary give a dinner in Jesus’ honor? What extravagant gift did Mary offer to Jesus? How does Judas react to this love offering? Do you think Judas really cared about the poor? Would he have sold the costly ointment (300 denarii, valued as a year’s salary of a day laborer) in support of the poor? Mary prophetically anoints Jesus for burial.

Final Thoughts: Having Jesus as our Lord and Savior does not mean that we can detour around death, we must pass through it (Psalm 23). Jesus is not a medicinal good luck charm. Passover is only six days away. Martha’s confession will be confirmed: “Jesus is the resurrection and the life.” What differences do you see in the personalities of Martha and Mary? How would you describe their relationship as sisters? Do you think that Jesus favored one sister over the other? Do you see yourself as more of a Mary or a Martha, how so? The name Martha means “lady” (feminine form of lord). The name Mary means “bitterness”. When has your sorrow and grief turned to joy? How do we say thank you to Jesus (express our love) for His goodness in our lives? Do we measure our generosity or throw caution to the wind when it comes to giving? What do you think Jesus meant by “The poor you have with you always, but you do not always have me” (12:8)? What makes you anxious or upset? What does Martha’s frank conversation with Jesus tell you about their relationship? To whom have you opened your home/heart? Is hospitality one of your gifts (I Peter 4:9)? If Satan can’t snatch us from Jesus, he will just make us busy (distracted). What are you busy with?

Next Session: Wednesday, May 11 – Yet another Mary: “Mary Magdalene”

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"
Wednesday, May 11, 2016 – 1:00 p.m. (Oasis Church)

Session Four: Today we visit Mary Magdalene.

Review: Highlights from Session Three – Mary & Martha

1. Martha and Mary were sisters of Lazarus; beloved friends of Jesus.
2. Martha's spiritual gift was hospitality, welcome and service. Mary's spiritual gift was learning.
3. Jesus tells Martha that Mary has chosen the "good portion" which will not be taken away from her. There is food and there is food! Jesus compares hearing the word to eating!
4. For everything there is a season: a time to sit and a time to serve. What time is it for you?
5. Mary offered an expensive gift to Jesus in appreciation for the raising of Lazarus. What was the gift (John 12) and what did it signify?
6. What do you make of Mary and Martha's words to Jesus: "Lord if you had been here our brother would not have died"? What happens to our faith when death comes knocking?
7. What are we busy with? What lesser things distract us from the greater thing?

Read Luke 8:1-3: What does history, tradition and Scripture tells us about Mary Magdalene? Was she a prostitute? No! Was she married to Jesus? No! Mary the Magdalene is mentioned 14 times in the four gospels. She was from Magdala (pop. 30,000; present day Migdal, pop. 1,627). Magdala (*fish tower*) was a prosperous fishing village located on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus breaks with rabbinic tradition & allows women to become disciples. Jesus, the Twelve, and some women are proclaiming good news. St. Luke tells us that some women in the company of Jesus have been "healed of evil spirits & infirmities". Three women are mentioned by name as having provided for Jesus & the Twelve out of their means. **Mary, called Magdalene** (named after her place of birth & residence) from whom Seven (perfect number indicating completeness) demons had gone out; **Joanna** the wife of Chuza (Herod Antipas' household manager; high social class); and **Susanna**.

Only the Western Church has said that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute; sometimes (unfoundedly) identifying her as the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-50 who anoints Jesus' feet with ointment & whose sins he forgives; or the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 7:53-8:11. This conflation of texts was given sanction in the sixth century by Pope Gregory the Great (540–604) in a famous homily in which he holds Mary up as a model of penitence. Pope Gregory positively identified the unnamed anointer and adulteress as Mary, and suggested that the ointment used on Jesus' feet was once used to scent Mary's body. The seven demons Jesus cast out of Mary were, according to Gregory, the seven cardinal sins, which include lust. But, wrote Gregory, when Mary threw herself at Jesus' feet, "she turned the mass of her crimes to virtues, in order to serve God entirely in penance." The Eastern Church has always honored Mary as an apostle, noting her as **the "apostle to the apostles,"** based on the account of the Gospel of John which has Jesus calling her by name and telling her to give the news of his resurrection to the other disciples.

Exorcism: *"Back! back! to your native hell, ye foul spirits of the pit,' and the miracle happened. Mary's deranged & nerve-racked mind became as tranquil as the troubled lake Jesus calmed. Sanity returned, the rosy tint was restored to her cheeks, and she was made whole. Now, 'clothed and in her right mind,' she was ready to become one of the most devoted woman disciples of Him to whom she owed so much. That she was deeply grateful for physical and mental healing is shown by what she endeavored to do for her Deliverer and His cause. Saved from the terrible power of hell, she gave of her best to Him who had fully emancipated her from demonic possession. When Christ saved her, He liberated the highest virtues of sacrifice, fortitude & courage."*

What do we know about demon possession? We know that the existence of demons and demon possession was widely known and accepted in the New Testament era, with no known cures apart from exorcisms. Have you known someone possessed by demons? Have you ever participated in an exorcism? See M. Scott Peck (Psychiatrist): Glimpses of the Devil.

Read John 19:23-27: We see 4 soldiers at the cross dividing the clothing of Jesus & casting lots for his seamless tunic; and 4 women at the cross keeping faith (the world & the church in short snapshots). We admire the women's fidelity. They stick with Jesus. **Read John 20:1-10**: Mary on the Run! An early morning run. It's the first day of the week (Sunday), early in the morning while it was still dark. Mary visits the cemetery & sees that the stone has been rolled away from the entrance of Jesus' tomb. Mary runs and tells Simon Peter & the Beloved Disciple. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and **WE** don't know where." Mary Magdalene is apparently alone in the cemetery, so why the WE? Where are the men when the third day (as promised by Jesus) arrives?

Read John 20:11-18: Mary is once again at the tomb. Did she run with the guys? While Peter and the Beloved investigate and go back to their homes, Mary hangs around the tomb. Mary, the Magdalene, moves from weeping & panic, to recognition & commissioning; from not knowing where Jesus' body is, to knowing the destination of her Lord's ascension. Mary "*stayed right there*" (not moving, not going anywhere). The posture of faith is one of STAYING & REMAINING. Mary stoops & looks inside the tomb. Two angels offer a pastoral & compassionate word: "Woman, why are you weeping?" Jesus is still "Lord" to Mary, even in death. Mary turns and sees a stranger whom she perceives to be the Gardener. She doesn't recognize Jesus. When have we also been sightless? Cleopas & his companion (Luke 24) didn't recognize Jesus on the Road to Emmaus until the guest became the host and said the table blessing. Jesus speaks her name: "Mary". The Good Shepherd knows his sheep & calls them by name and they recognize his voice (John 10:3-4). Jesus offers a one word sermon (see Isaiah 43), & Mary's life is forever changed. Mary moves from despair to elation. Mary responds, "*Rabbouni*" (i.e. "My Teacher"), the expected response of a disciple. Mary turns & embraces Jesus. Jesus says to Mary, "Do not keep holding on to me" (present tense imperative). The embrace is allowed, but it cannot be an end unto itself. The embrace must be surrendered so that others may come to believe and abide (stay/remain). When one meets Jesus, one is given a co-mission. Mary's first post-resurrection responsibility (privilege) is to "go and tell my brothers" what has happened. Jesus says, "Tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Jesus transacted an adoption from the cross between his mother and the beloved disciple. Now the disciples hear a word of forgiveness & belonging. Forgiven people are sent out to proclaim forgiveness. Commissioned, Mary comes to the disciples and tells them, "**I have seen the Lord**". Mary then relays to them the words of Jesus. In Luke's Gospel (24:11) we are told that the disciples did not believe the testimony, thinking it to be an idle tale (utter nonsense). A woman's testimony was not considered valid in a court of law, & yet Jesus chose women to be the first to hear good news and to share it with others.

Final Thoughts: In Mary we see what Christ is able to do for a woman. When Jesus first met her, she was an afflicted, tormented soul, but Jesus healed her of her insanity & of the maladies of her soul. He made her His loyal & sacrificial follower. In Mary we see what a woman can do for the One who has done so much for her. Healed & saved, Mary practiced her faith in following Jesus, & ministering to Him & His disciples out of her substance, & witnessing to His death & Resurrection to others.

The poet writes: "*Not she with traitorous kiss her Master stung, Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue; She, when Apostles fled, could dangers brave, Last at the Cross, and earliest at the grave.*"

Next Session: Wednesday, May 25 – "Outcasts and Untouchables – Nameless Women"

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"
Wednesday, May 25, 2016 – 1:00 p.m. (Oasis Church)

Session Five: Today we visit four Nameless Women of the New Testament (i.e. Outcasts & Untouchables ... the Samaritan Woman, the Adulterous Woman, the Menopausal Woman, and the Syrophenician Woman).

Review: Highlights from Session Four – Mary the Magdalene

1. Mary was from Magdala, a prosperous fishing village. She was not a prostitute, nor was she the wife of Jesus.
2. Jesus healed Mary of her demon possession (seven demons). Mary became one of his disciples, providing for the mission of Christ out of her means (Luke 8:1-3). At the tomb, she calls Jesus, "My Rabbi".
3. Pope Gregory (d. 604 AD) and Martin Luther (d. 1546 AD) held Mary to be a model of penitence. The church of the East honored Mary as "the apostle to the apostles".
4. Mary goes for a run on the first day of the week (Sunday). She was the first to see the Resurrected Jesus, and the first to bear witness ("I have seen the Lord.").
5. What happens when Jesus (the Good Shepherd, John 10) speaks Mary's name and our names?
6. In Mary we see what a woman can do for the One who has done so much for her.
7. The poet writes: "Not she with traitorous kiss her Master stung, Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue; She, when Apostles fled, could dangers brave, Last at the Cross, and earliest at the grave."

Read John 4:1-42. *How does Jesus evangelize?* Jesus brings the Holy Spirit to the Samaritan Woman and her city. Jesus leaves Judea and departs for Galilee. Scripture says that **he had to** pass through Samaria. Life's *HAVE-TO'S* are the work of the Holy Spirit (see John 3). It wasn't a geographical necessity. It was a Divine (spiritual) Necessity. Jesus is exhausted, so he sits at Jacob's well. Jesus sees the Samaritan Woman, sees through her and sees her through. Jesus engages the Samaritan Woman in a life transforming conversation. The name of the Samaritan town is Sychar. Many scholars believe that this town was previously known as Shechem (location where Dinah was seduced/raped; see Genesis 34). The Samaritan Woman comes to Jacob's well at noon. Why does she come to the well at Noon? Archeology shows that she had other options (closer wells). She avoids people. She probably has no friends. Her reputation precedes her. Is it possible that the Holy Spirit has directed her paths to Jacob's well at this precise moment in time? We meet a woman with skeletons in her closet. Jesus asks the Samaritan Woman for a drink of well water. She in turn asks him why He, a Jewish Man, would ask her for a drink. Questions are a good beginning to evangelism. Notice: Jesus doesn't lead with the question: "Do you realize that you are a sinner?" Jesus says to the Samaritan Woman, "If you only knew the free gift of God, and who is doing the asking, you would have asked and received Living Water." The Holy Spirit is not a reward or a prize; it is the free gift of God for the asking. The Samaritan Woman comes close to insulting Jesus: "You have nothing to draw water with. Where do you get that living water? Do you think you're greater than Jacob who gave us this well?" How is the water Jesus gives us different from the well waters of daily life? Jesus says that those who drink His Living Water will become Fountains of Living Water for others. Finally the Samaritan Woman asks for Living Water, but she misunderstands, thinking that the free gift is *a Divine Fire Hydrant*. Things begin to get serious. Jesus tells the Woman to go and get her husband. **THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT?** Jesus leads with the Gospel (promising) and now speaks the Law (accusing). Jesus speaks the truth

with love (Ephesians 4:15). How is Evangelism a matter of both Law and Gospel? Jesus knows the woman has been married 5 times and is currently cohabitating. The Woman dodges Jesus' question. How so? She changes the topic: Where is the proper place to worship? In verse 22, Jesus emphatically says, "the salvation comes from the Jewish people". Jesus puts down a contesting religion. All religions are not equal in the eyes of God. A promise is offered: "AN HOUR is coming and is NOW HERE when people will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth (Jesus)." The Holy Trinity is seeking true worshipers. What surprising announcement does Jesus make in verse 26 (*ego eimi*)? INTERRUPTION: The disciples earlier left Jesus while they secured food in Sychar. Now they return. What surprise awaits them? The Samaritan Woman leaves her jar at the well. The Fountain of Gushing Water begins to flow as she delivers Samaria's first sermon. Her question in verse 29 assumes an answer of NO. The sermon works. Samaritans come to faith. What lesson is Jesus trying to teach His disciples? The Harvest is NOW! What must we do? Jesus stays with the Samaritans for 2 days and then departs for Galilee. What do we know? We know that Jesus is indeed the Savior of the World.

Read John 7:53-8:11. Notice the brackets indicating that this story may be a later addition to John's Gospel. While Jesus is teaching in the Temple, a woman is CAUGHT in the act of adultery and brought to Jesus. Where is the man (double standards)? We know what the law says (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). What will the Gospel say? Justice and mercy! What is Jesus writing in the dirt (twice)? He takes the focus off the woman and onto Himself. It is likely that the accusers set a trap for the woman so that they can entrap Jesus. Who gets to throw the first stone? Who gets to be the judge (condemn) according to Jesus? Only God is sin-free. What does the Adulterous Woman get right? What does she get wrong? What is Jesus' final word to the Woman and to us? Please! Freedom *from* and freedom *for*! If you could write the conclusion of this story, how would you end it?

Read Mark 5:24-34. One of Mark's sandwich stories. Jairus' daughter is about 12 years old. A woman has had a discharge of blood for 12 years. In this story we have two nameless daughters. What assumption do people sometimes erroneously make about the relationship between sin and suffering? What urgency is there in our text? The Menopausal Woman has tried everything to get well. She believes that simply touching Jesus' tallit (prayer shawl) will bring her healing. But only a member of one's family is permitted to touch a man's tallit. How does Jesus know that someone has touched him? The disciples say, "Don't be silly. Look at the crowds. Who hasn't touched you?" Jesus calls the Woman "*daughter*" indicating that the touch is welcomed; she is family. What do these two daughters teach us about patience and persistence? How is death only a nap for believers?

Read Mark 7:24-30. What defiles a person according to verses 20-23? In the regions of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus reveals that He has come to save the Gentiles along with the Jews. Jesus wants his presence to be a secret, but He cannot be hidden. A Syrophoenician Woman is desperate. By birth she is considered unclean. Her daughter has an unclean spirit possessing her. What does she beg Jesus to do? Does Jesus' response to her request surprise you? The word for dog is "family pet". The Woman accepts the status of Gentile; even dogs get the crumbs that fall from the family table.

Final Thoughts: The Samaritan Woman is an outcast and an untouchable in gender, nationality, and morality. But she is the first person in the Gospel of John to hear "I AM". She caught sight of a thirsty man, then a Jew, then a Rabbi, afterwards a prophet, and last of all the Messiah (I AM). What does the Samaritan Woman have to teach us about faith and worship and evangelism? The Adulterous Woman reminds us that God takes sin seriously, but forgiveness even more so! There is a power for holiness in Jesus' grace. What do outcasts and untouchables teach us about the Kingdom of God?

Next Session: Wednesday, June 8 (NOTE change of date from June 1!) - Dorcas & Lydia

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"
Wednesday, June 8, 2016 – 1:00 p.m. (Oasis Church)

Session Six: Today we visit Dorcas and Lydia. In Joppa there was a disciple named Dorcas; aka Tabitha who was known for her good works and acts of charity. This is the only time in the Bible that the word "female disciple" (*mathetria*) is found. But note Luke 8:2-3. Tabitha bears fruit and imitates Jesus. Healings become vessels of evangelism. Lydia, a business woman from Thyatira, living in Philippi, is a God-fearer who becomes a Christ-follower. It's all GRACE. The Holy Spirit works faith where and when it pleases God.

Review: Highlights from Session Five – Outcasts & Untouchables: Nameless Women

1. **John 4:** The Samaritan Woman: Jesus sees her, sees through her, and sees her through. It wasn't luck that brought the Samaritan Woman to Faith in Jesus; it was the Holy Spirit and the providence/election of God. Somethings are a MUST (*dei*). The Samaritan Woman is the first person in the Gospel of John to hear Jesus say, "I AM" (*ego eimi*). What does this story teach us about Evangelism? How does the Living Water become a GUSHER for others? Where did you see LAW (accusation and demand) and GOSPEL (promise and gift) in this story? **The Salvation** comes from the Jews (verse 22). Some people worship what they know and others worship what they do not know. Not all religions are equal. Jesus isn't politically correct. Does the church sometimes get in the way of Evangelism? (Luther: One beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.) Compare John 3 & 4 – Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman.
2. **John 8:** The Women Caught in the Act of Adultery: Where is the fornicating man? Jesus is teaching in the Temple when he is summoned to play Judge. What surprises you in this story? What do you think Jesus was writing in the dirt? Who gets to throw the first stone? Since Jesus is the Judge of the Living and the Dead, what happens when He absolves the guilty? The Adulterous Woman reminds us that God takes sin seriously, but forgiveness even more so! There is a power for holiness in Jesus' grace. Shall we sin all the more that grace may abound? Or, go and sin no more?
3. **Mark 5:** A Markan Sandwich (a story within a story). Two nameless daughters are in need of healing. Jairus' daughter is sick unto death. She is about 12 years old. A Menopausal woman has been bleeding for 12 years. Only a member of the family (a daughter) was allowed to touch a man's tallit. What do these two daughters teach us about patience and persistence? How is death only a nap for believers?
4. **Mark 7:** A gentile woman (Syrophoenician) begs Jesus to heal her daughter. Why does Jesus call her a pet dog? Even family pets get the children's bread crumbs.

Read Acts 9:36-43. **Dorcas (Greek); AKA Tabitha** (Aramaic, meaning "female gazelle or antelope". One species of gazelle is now known as the Dorcas gazelle.). Tabitha/Dorcas was a disciple of Jesus in coastal Joppa. Throughout her life she was ALWAYS doing good and helping the poor. Evidently Dorcas was a seamstress. Dorcas became sick and died. Meanwhile Peter was in a neighboring town called Lydda (**11 miles southeast of Joppa**). An SOS was sent to Peter: "COME ASAP". Peter is asked to come to Dorcas' funeral (usually

within 24 hours of death), but instead he attends her resurrection. Peter visits the dead body of Dorcas and prays over her. Peter then says, “Tabitha, get up.” Get up is a resurrection word. She woke up. Does it surprise you that Dorcas is called a disciple? The word DISCIPLE is found 284 times in the Bible. Read Acts 9:32-35: Notice that in Lydda, Peter spent time with the SAINTS. He healed a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden and paralyzed for 8 years. Peter says, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make your bed.” Immediately he rose! When the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw Aeneas, they turned to the Lord. Healings become vessels of evangelism. Tabitha is full of good works and charity. Widows, recipients of Tabitha’s charity are showcasing her good works to Peter. What do you think her good works included? Do you think that Psalms 30 (mourning into dancing) was celebrated with Tabitha’s resuscitation? Notice that Tabitha’s rising created faith in Jesus in Joppa. Why is it surprising that Peter spends time lodging at the home of Simon the Tanner (dead animal skins) during his extended stay in Joppa (9:43)? January 27 and October 25 are days set aside on the liturgical calendar for the joint commemoration of Dorcas, Lydia of Thyatira, and Phoebe.

Read Acts 16:6-15. Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:40-18:22) - Paul, Silas, and Timothy are in Philippi (a leading city of the District of Macedonia—and a Roman Colony) because the Holy Spirit is directing their paths. Paul has a vision of a “man of Macedonia” begging him to come over and help them (request for the Gospel). In Philippi, there is no Synagogue to be found (required ten men). So Paul and his companions travel outside the city and down to the river where it was reported that there was a place of prayer. It was the Sabbath. Lydia was from Thyatira (Revelation 2:18), a city of Asia Minor known for the manufacture of purple dye. The expensive dye (from the secretions of shellfish; extracted from the glands of a spiny spiral-shaped sea snail—the Tyrian purple from Tyre) made a profitable trade. Lydia was a successful (wealthy) businesswoman, who sold a type of cloth prized for its reddish scarlet - deep purple color. When Lydia, a God-fearer/worshiper, came to faith in Jesus (the Lord opened her heart), she and her entire household (children and servants too) were baptized. Having come to faith, Lydia begs Paul for the privilege and joy of using her God-given wealth in service to the Gospel. Lydia “prevails” upon Paul (only two times in N.T. – see Luke 24:29). Lydia becomes a patron and a benefactor of the Gospel—offering the hospitality of her home. The first convert to Christianity in Macedonia was a woman. Those judged faithful want nothing more than to use and lose their lives in service to the Gospel. What does Lydia teach us about the importance of baptism, worship & stewardship? **Read Acts 16:40.** Paul & Silas, released from jail, visit Lydia and offer encouragement to the believers before departing!

Final Thoughts: Would you like your eulogy to include the words, “In city/town there was a disciple named _____.” When someone dies what is the proper place for weeping and for eulogizing the good works of the deceased? Dorcas societies, which provide clothing to the poor, are named after her. Lydia is not only successful, but also a servant of the Lord. How has the Lord opened your heart to hear/respond to the Gospel? What is it that you admire most about Lydia and Dorcas? What do you wish to be admired for? What evidence will there be of your “well-lived life”?

Next Session: Wednesday, June 15 - Phoebe, Priscilla & Philip’s Daughters

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"
Wednesday, June 15, 2016 – 1:00 p.m. (Oasis Church)

Session Seven: Today we visit Phoebe, Priscilla & Philip's Daughters

Phoebe was a deacon and a church leader. She was the unselfish, liberal helper or patroness of the saints, conspicuous for her works of charity & also hospitality. Priscilla (Prisca) worked with her husband (Aquila), skinning critters and tanning hides. Husband and wife were tent-makers, fashioning portable homes from leather, but they were also a clergy couple (perhaps seminary professors?). Some suggest that Prisca may have been the author of Hebrews. Philip's four unmarried daughters were evangelists/prophets (they preached the good news).

Review: Highlights from Session Six – Dorcas and Lydia

Acts 9:32-43

- A. In Acts 9, Peter, in the course of his travels came to the saints (baptized believers; holy ones) living in Lydda (town in the Plain of Sharon, 11 miles southeast of coastal Joppa). Peter found Aeneas who, being paralyzed, had been confined to a pallet (bed-ridden) for 8 years. Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed!" Immediately he rose (Easter word). How is this story a baptismal story? Sin paralyzes us and keeps us bed ridden. Jesus heals us, raises us, and we make our bed. The residents in and around Lydda see Aeneas (a living illustration of Easter) and repent & believe in Jesus. Healing becomes evangelical.
- B. In coastal Joppa there was a disciple named Dorcas (Greek – Gazelle); aka Tabitha (Aramaic) who was known for her good works and acts of charity (FULL OF IT; filled with the Holy Spirit, disciples produce good works). Faith and works accompany each other. This is the only time in the Bible that the word "female disciple" (*mathetria*) is found. Dorcas became ill and died. Her friends WASHED her and laid her in an UPPER ROOM. Why do they send for Peter? To attend the funeral (24 hours) or to resuscitate Dorcas? The widows display evidence of Dorcas' fruitful faith. Dorcas was a gifted seamstress. Peter prays and commands Tabitha to RISE. How is this a baptismal story (Luther: Das Todlein – little death; 3 births)? All Joppa heard the good news, and many believed in Jesus! What is significant about Peter lodging at Simon's house? Jan. 27 & Oct. 25 are days set aside on the liturgical calendar for the joint commemoration of Dorcas, Lydia of Thyatira, & Phoebe.

Acts 16:6-15

- A. Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:40-18:22) - Paul, Silas, and Timothy are in Philippi (a leading city of the District of Macedonia—and a Roman Colony) because the Holy Spirit is directing their paths. Instead of finding the MAN OF MACEDONIA, Paul finds Lydia and other God-fearers worshiping the God of Israel in a place of prayer (by the river). Lydia, a wealthy (purple cloth) and successful business woman from Thyatira, living in Philippi, becomes a Christ-follower. It's all GRACE. The Holy Spirit works faith where and when it pleases God. God open hearts to hear the Gospel.
- B. Baptized, Lydia prevails upon (Luke 24:29) the Apostles to let her be a benefactor of the Gospel. What does Lydia teach us about the importance of baptism, worship &

stewardship? Read Acts 16:40. Paul & Silas, released from jail, visit Lydia and offer encouragement to the believers before departing!

Read Romans 16:1-2. Phoebe is probably the carrier of Paul's letter to the Church in Rome; and therefore responsible in some way for authoritative interpretation of the letter to its recipients. The letter-bearer would sometimes be the one to read it to the recipients and explain its contents; Phoebe was the 'authoritative interpreter' and coach to the lector. The first expositor of Paul's greatest letter was an ordained travelling businesswoman. In Romans 16, Paul sends greetings to 26 named people. Phoebe is described as *diakonos* (deacon) of the *ekklesia* (church) in Cenchreae (Corinth's eastern port – Acts 18:18), and *prostatis* (patron or guardian over the affairs of others) to many and to Paul himself. Protatis: Literally means "one who stands by in case of need." It is classical Greek describing a trainer in the Olympic games, who stood by the athletes to see that they were properly trained and not over-trained and rightly girded when they lined up for the signal. Phoebe was a patron (benefactor of the Gospel). The title of Phoebe as a *diakonos* accounts for the "first recorded 'deacon' in the history of Christianity." Phoebe is tied to a specific local church, the church at Cenchrea, which makes her appointment (position of responsibility) a local function. She is also a minister.

Read Acts 18:2-4, 18, 24-26. Paul shared a common trade/vocation with Priscilla and Aquila, staying with them during his time in Corinth (18 months). They were tentmakers/leather makers (canvas for sails also). Why were Prisca & Aquila residing in Corinth? Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) commanded the Jews to leave Rome in AD 49. In everything God works for good. Prisca and Aquila became prominent co-workers with Paul in tent-making and in gospel-izing. They accompanied Paul to Ephesus, where they later instructed the learned teacher Apollos about Christian baptism. They helped Apollos polish his proclamation and perfect his theology. Evidently, Apollos only knew the baptism of John, even though he had been instructed in THE WAY of Lord. Luther said that there is enough in baptism to study and practice our whole life long. Read I Corinthians 16:19. In Asia Minor (Ephesus) Aquila and Prisca, along with the church in their house sent hearty greetings to the Christians in Corinth. Read Romans 16:3-5. Paul sends greetings to Prisca and Aquila, who are back in Rome, leading a church in their home. Prisca and Aquila labored with Paul in preaching the Gospel and teaching the Faith of Jesus. They risked their necks for Paul's sake. Paul and ALL the churches of the Gentiles give thanks to God for the faithful work of this clergy couple. Greet also the church in their house. Prisca & Aquila are always mentioned together; ministry team. In II Timothy 4:19, greetings are extended again to Prisca & Aquila. Note sequence of names.

Read Acts 21:8-14. Philip was a prominent minister in the New Testament church. He was a deacon who ministered in Samaria & baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch. When Paul and his team came to Caesarea (end of third missionary journey), they stayed with Philip who was living there with his 4 daughters. Luke describes these women simply as "four virgin daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21:9). Eusebius (historian & bishop of Caesarea, AD 313) refers to them as "great lights" or "mighty luminaries" carrying on the work of the Apostles.

Final Thought: Women have an always will play a prominent role/place in the proclamation of the Gospel. How do Phoebe, Prisca and Philip's daughters inspire you?

Next Session: Wednesday, June 29 – Lois & Eunice (Final Session until fall - Sept. 21)

2016 Women's Afternoon Study: "New Testament Ladies"
Wednesday, June 29, 2016 – 1:00 p.m. (Oasis Church)

Session Eight: Today we visit Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice

We look at three generations of Faith family tree: Lois—Eunice—Timothy. What role have your mother and grandma played in your walk of faith? Example: My Grandma Ethel in New Richmond, WI and Grandma Sater in Springfield, MN. Not everyone gets to grow up under the influence and tutelage of parents and grandparents. How may we be surrogates for those absent of spiritual and biological mons/dads and grandparents?

Review: Highlights from Session Seven – Phoebe, Priscilla and Philip's Daughters

- A. Phoebe: Deacon and Church Leader in Cenchrea. Unselfish, liberal helper and patron of the saints. She was probably the carrier of Paul's letter to the Church in Rome; 'authoritative interpreter' and coach to the lector.
- B. Priscilla and Aquila: Tent-makers and a clergy couple. Gifted theologians who opened their homes as house churches. Prisca may have been the writer of Hebrews. Guided by the Holy Spirit they traveled where God led them: Rome to Corinth to Ephesus to Corinth to Rome. They stuck their necks out for Paul's sake. In four of the six biblical references to this husband and wife, Priscilla's name appears first, indicating her as the more dominant partner (remember Deborah and her husband Lappidoth—Judges 4:4?). Prisca was a church developer and a mentor to missionaries.
- C. Philip's four nameless unmarried daughters were evangelists/prophets (they preached the good news). Luke describes these women simply as "four virgin daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21:9). Eusebius (historian & bishop of Caesarea, AD 313) refers to them as "great lights" or "mighty luminaries" carrying on the work of the Apostles.
- D. Paul worked alongside both men and women in the ministry of the Gospel. God shows no partiality. In Romans 16, four of the first seven names belong to women; one third of the 29 total names are women's. Suffice it to say that Paul was not an advocate of a male-dominated ministry, nor a despiser of women.

Read II Timothy 1:1-7. Paul writes to his beloved Timothy, who is as a son to him (I Timothy 1:2). What and how does Paul remember Timothy? Paul's ceaseless prayers, Timothy's tears and sincere faith, and well-grounded faith are all highlighted. How have prayers, tears, and faith formation been essential companions and priorities in your walk with Jesus as Lord?
Read II Timothy 3:14-15. What has Timothy been acquainted with since childhood? The home was a primary place of devotions and catechesis for Timothy. Lois and Eunice illustrate that religious education is not something we source out. How are you teaching your children about *Ego Eimi* (I, I AM)? The Faith is supposed to get passed on! It's a gift, but it must be fanned so that the flame doesn't go out. What does Paul mean by "the laying on of hands?" This happens in both baptism and Confirmation and Ordination/Installation. What does it mean to have a SINCERE FAITH? IN the first century, artisans would make statues. They might have flaws which were covered by wax. But if one brought the pottery out into the sun, then

the wax would melt revealing the crack or flaw. A sincere faith has no cracks or covered up blemishes. Paul reminds Timothy and each of us that God has not given us a spirit (aptitude) of fear, but of power (dynamite) and love and self-control. What are we doing with our God-given aptitude?

Read Acts 16:1-3. Context: Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:40-18:22) which begins with a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabas regarding John Mark (Acts 13:5, 13); results in a separation. Paul takes Silas with him and travels through Syria and Cilicia. Paul also traveled to Derbe and Lystra where Paul meets Timothy. The name Lois means "desirable" or "agreeable". It appears only once in the Bible. The name Eunice is Greek indicating perhaps that Lois was married to a Greek. We know that Eunice was a Jewish Woman, who was a believer. Timothy's father was Greek/Gentile. We assume that Lois and Eunice were both unequally yoked; married to unbelievers. What do we learn about Timothy? He is a disciple, and is well-spoken-of. He has a good reputation. Paul wants Timothy to accompany him on his missionary journey. It's interesting that Paul has Timothy circumcised; not a requirement for salvation. Is it hard for mothers to raise their children in the faith if fathers are spiritually absent, indifferent or hostile?

Read Romans 16:7. Here is an unexpected bonus. Is it **Junia or Junias**? Male or Female? Junia is one of the 26 people who are named and sent greetings in Romans 16. What do we know about Junia? She was a fellow countryman (fellow Jew) and also a fellow prisoner (under arrest with Paul; cell mates of sorts, incarcerated for simply telling people about Jesus). She was known to or among the Apostles. She lived in Rome. Most scholars believe that Andronicus was her husband, but there is no mention of that in the text – he could possibly have been a brother or other relative. An "s" was added to Junia (female name) in later manuscripts, making it a male name. Note: among 250 uses of this name in Greek literature, it is always feminine and never masculine. Just sayin'! Paul says that Andronicus and Junia were outstanding/prominent among or well known to (2 ways of translating this text) the Apostles, & IN CHRIST before he was. Perhaps Junia became a believer in Jesus on Pentecost Sunday and then returned with the Gospel to Rome.

Final Thoughts: AWANA is a Christian youth ministry whose name comes from the first letters of the words in 2 Timothy 2:15: "Approved workmen are not ashamed." The Timothy Award recognizes the completion of four books containing Bible verses and special application activities, resulting in the memorization of 432 Bible verses over four years. Timothy traveled with Paul on his second Missionary Journey. He is also listed as a co-author of Philippians and I & II Thessalonians. Timothy was the recipient of two letters (I & II Timothy). In Romans 16:7, Paul praises a woman named Junia as "outstanding among the apostles." No commentator prior to the 13th century questioned that this apostle was a woman. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407, Archbishop of Constantinople, an important Early Church Father) wrote of Romans 16:7, "O how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!" This unanimity of testimony over a millennium is particularly striking since it remained during a long period of eroding toleration of women's ministries in the medieval church. All the ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts commending the outstanding apostles in Romans 16:7 read either "Junia" or "Julia", both feminine forms.

Next Session: Wednesday, September 21 (1pm) – Study: The Revelation of Jesus Christ.