

Jesus and Women in the Gospels (A summary)

1. In the classical past women like Ruth, Esther, Deborah and Judith were heroes. But by the time of Jesus they were clearly inferior (cf. Ben Sirach).
2. The outstanding woman in the Gospels is unquestionable the Virgin Mary. She is praised for who she is not merely because of her famous son. She is held before the reader of the Gospels as an outstanding example of faith, courage, obedience and intelligence. Mary's influence on Jesus' attitude towards women cannot be precisely known, but must have been positive and beyond measure.
3. Women are among the disciples, and these women carry a leadership roles (particularly in finance.). Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene are held up as outstanding examples of discipleship. (Lk 8:1-3, Mt 12: 46-50)
4. A woman (Martha) makes one of the highest Christological confessions in the Gospels (Jn 11:29).
5. Women in the genealogy (Mt) and in the birth stories make clear that Jesus came as a savior of all people – both men and women.
6. Jesus demonstrates a deep compassionate concern for all women – both saints, like Martha and Mary, and sinners like the woman in the house of Simon (Lk 7:35-51). They appear as heroes in some of his parables.
7. On Easter morning Mary is told to “instruct” the disciples about the resurrection (Jn 20:16). The woman at the well becomes an effective “evangelist” in her village (Jn 4:39)
8. By the command of Jesus, women's resource are left in their hands and under their control (Jn 12: 1-8; Lk 8:1-3).
9. Jesus deliberately shaped his teachings in order to communicate his message to women as well as to men.
10. The Gospel authors/editors selected and presented stories from and about Jesus that demonstrated his concern for all his listeners. This selection continued Jesus' elevation of women to a place of equality with men in the community he created.

Women in the Epistles: A Summary

Women in the Church: In general

1. The key reference appears to be Gal 3:28 where Paul affirms that “in Christ” there is no “male and female.”
2. Paul affirms “in Adam all die,..” (I Cor 15:22). He does not (like Ben Sirach 25:24) blame Eve.
3. In the apostolic band men and women traveled together and served together (I Cor 9:5; Rom 16:1-16)
4. The NT has a woman apostle, women teachers, women prophets, women leaders of churches, women deacons (ministers), “widows”, and perhaps elders (presbuterai).
5. The outside world saw a community led by both men and women in that both men and women were jailed (Acts 8:3; Rom. 16:7).
6. Women participated in the leadership of worship.
7. Greek women of high standing were attracted to the Gospel Paul preached (Ac 17:4, 12).
8. Women are called: helper/patroness/leaders, fellow workers, hard workers and workers in Paul’s list of greetings in Romans 16:1-16. Six women and two men are so commended.
9. Women are told to be silent when they disrupt public worship or when they undermine the faith of the church with heretical teachings.

Women in Christian Marriage

1. The love between Christ and the Church is set forth as the pattern for the bond of love in Christian marriage. The two become one in body and in spirit.
2. The husband and wife are called to be mutually subordinate to each other (the husband offers serving love like the love of Christ to the Church and the wife grants her husband a place of leadership)
3. Equality is affirmed in the marital relationship which is described as a “right.” (I Cor 7:3).
4. The two are joint heirs of the gift of eternal life (I Pet 3:7).