

Week 5: Women Co-Laborers Part 1

1) Focus

The New Testament gives multiple examples of **women in leadership, teaching, and apostolic ministry**. Luke and Paul both affirm their calling—especially Priscilla, Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche, and Junia—showing that God equips both men and women with authority and grace for ministry.

2) Key Scriptures (KJV/refs)

- **Acts 18:24–26** – Priscilla and Aquila explain the Word “more accurately” to Apollos.
- **Philippians 4:2–3** – Paul honors Euodia and Syntyche as **fellow workers** in the Gospel.
- **Romans 16:1–7** – Phoebe (deacon), Priscilla & Aquila (pastors), and Junia (apostle) are all publicly commended by Paul.

3) Key Teaching Points

A. Priscilla & Aquila: The Teachers Behind the Teacher (Acts 18:24–26)

1. **Apollos** was “eloquent” and “mighty in the Scriptures.”
2. **Priscilla and Aquila** heard him and **privately corrected** him—showing discernment and authority in the Word.
3. Luke lists **Priscilla’s name first**, emphasizing her recognized leadership and teaching gift.
4. Priscilla’s ministry models **spiritual accuracy, humility, and courage** in correcting doctrine.

B. Paul’s Affirmation of Women Leaders (Philippians 4:2–3)

1. Paul refers to **Euodia and Syntyche** as **fellow workers**—the same term used for Timothy, Titus, and Luke.
2. Paul **does not question** their authority or position, only their unity.

3. He commands the church to **help these women**, implying their leadership and responsibility were vital to the mission.

C. Paul's Commendations in Romans 16

1. **Phoebe** – Called a “**deacon**” (**diakonos**) of the church in Cenchreae; the term refers to a recognized, official role.
2. **Priscilla & Aquila** – A pastoral couple who hosted and led a church in their home; Paul calls them “**fellow workers**” who risked their lives for him.
3. **Junia** – A **female apostle** “of note among the apostles,” honored for her outstanding ministry.
4. These mentions show Paul **honoring women's authority** rather than restricting it.

D. Cultural and Linguistic Significance

- When Paul greets **Priscilla and Aquila**, he often places **Priscilla first**, signaling the grace and respect she carried.
- The word “**deacon**” (**diakonos**) and “**servant**” are often translated inconsistently—yet Scripture uses them interchangeably for both men and women.
- **Junia's name** was later changed to “Junius” in some translations to hide her gender, but no such male name existed in Greek literature.

E. Apostolic Recognition and Equality

- Paul affirms that leadership, teaching, and apostolic ministry are given by **Christ Himself** (**Ephesians 4:11–12**).
- The same Spirit that empowers men **also empowers women**—for teaching, pastoring, evangelizing, and prophesying.

4) Biblical Truths

1. **Scripture interprets Scripture.** When the full counsel of God's Word is examined, it consistently reveals that women were leaders, prophets, and teachers throughout both Testaments.
2. **Paul was not anti-women**—he was their greatest champion when read in full context.
3. **The gifts of the Spirit** are not distributed by gender but by **divine will** (1 Corinthians 12:11).

4. God's kingdom operates through **grace, not hierarchy**—whoever is yielded to the Spirit is used by Him.

5) Application

1. **Recognize Grace:** Celebrate and acknowledge spiritual gifts in both men and women.
2. **Empower Leadership:** Make space for women to teach, lead, and disciple within the church.
3. **Use Your Voice:** Like Priscilla, use biblical knowledge to build up others and correct gently when needed.
4. **Partner in Ministry:** Build teams that reflect the partnership of Priscilla and Aquila—equal, respectful, and Spirit-led.
5. **Champion Others:** Follow Paul's example—commend, assist, and support every co-laborer in Christ.

6) Discussion Questions

1. What does Priscilla's example teach us about using knowledge to strengthen others?
2. Why is Paul's phrase "fellow workers" so significant when referring to women?
3. What do you think it meant for Junia to be "notable among the apostles"?
4. How should churches today model Paul's pattern of honoring women in leadership?
5. How can both men and women serve together more effectively in ministry?

7) Personal Reflection & Prayer

- **Search Me:** Have I ever underestimated someone's calling because of their gender or role?
- **Availability:** How can I personally honor and encourage the gifts of the Holy Spirit in others, regardless of gender?
- **Intercession:** "Lord, help me give me understanding a revelation on your Word."

8) Sticky Statement

"God's calling rests on character and grace, not gender."

9) Memory Verse:

"In Christ there is neither male nor female... for you are all one in Christ Jesus." – Galatians 3:28

10) Notes: