

I bring you greetings from the Church at Cenchreae near Corinth. My name is Phoebe; I am a deacon in that congregation. I believe deacon is the correct word in your language. For me, the word is *diakonos*, which translated literally means “servant.”

I offer to you my gift of service. It is a gift that God has allowed me to share in many ways and with many people. As a partner to the Apostle Paul, I served by delivering his letter to the Romans. That letter seemed to change things. The Church really took off after hearing Paul’s instructions.

I praise the Lord because I have been blessed in so many ways. Because of my personal financial blessings, I have served as benefactor to Paul. Many of his travels, preaching, and church plants never would have happened had it not been for my service in this way.

I feel a bit self-conscious, though. I don’t mean to sound arrogant. I truly give all the glory to God and am simply amazed by the opportunities that God has afforded to me. Paul is not the only minister I’ve been able to help. I’ve had a part in many other ministries and each one has spiritually enriched my life in ways that I find it difficult to describe.

I know that I am lucky. I was given the ability and resources to address needs where I saw them. Not everyone’s way of serving will look like mine. However, I believe that Christ has called each of us to service in one way or another. The key is to keep our eyes open to see when there is a need to be filled, to keep our ears listening for the subtle cries for help, and to keep our hearts reaching out to those for whom we can be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Do you remember that story that he told while he still walked the earth? My grandmother would tell it to me. She said that he once looked at all those disciples who followed him around the countryside and he told them that when he came into his glory he would separate them into those who had served him on earth and those who had not. How did it go? “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

I am Phoebe and I count it an honor to serve Christ and Christ’s family. Thank you.

Discussion Suggestions - Phoebe

We know very little about Phoebe. She has very little mention in the Bible, but what is spoken about her speaks volumes as to who she was as a person and a follower of Jesus Christ.

In his letter, Paul names Phoebe as a deaconess, or servant; one who actually *serves* the needs of others. Phoebe was likely to have been a wealthy woman, she certainly had enough funds to be a significant benefactor to Paul, and she intended to be generous to the Romans as well.

- ✦ Using newsprint or a white board, write the word “Servant” at the top. Have the members of your group brainstorm anything that comes to mind dealing with that word. It can be their definition of what a servant is, a name of someone they have known that was a true servant, etc. Take about five minutes for this activity. When the group is done brainstorming, discuss what was discovered using the following questions:
- ✦ What does it mean to be a servant of Christ?
- ✦ What is true servanthood like? What is hard about it? What is easy about it?
- ✦ Does all service look alike?
- ✦ How can we affirm/uphold one another in our life of servanthood?
- ✦ How has this group been called to serve?
- ✦ How have you as individual women been called to serve? How can your gifts be brought together for a greater service?

- ✦ Discuss as a group the ways your Women’s Ministry group has been called to serve both locally and in a wider sense. What steps are you taking to nurture that call to service? How have you “kept your eyes open” to see where other needs can be fulfilled by you as Phoebe suggests in her monologue?

- ✦ Brainstorm again ways to enhance the service you are already fulfilling, as well as other ways in which your group and individual women within your group can further serve Christ in the world.

PRAYER:

Close in prayer, thanking God for allowing us to be His hands and His feet. Ask for God’s help and guidance in seeking opportunities to serve both as individual women and as a Women’s Ministry group.