

Prophesying Daughters

Bible Background • LUKE 2:36-38; ACTS 1:12-14, 2:16-21, 21:8-9

Printed Text • LUKE 2:36-38; ACTS 2:16-21, 21:8-9 | Devotional Reading • JOEL 2:28-32

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXAMINE how God called and empowered women to proclaim His message, AFFIRM contributions of godly women to the church's mission, and ADVOCATE for greater recognition of God-called women in the church.

In Focus

Gina had enjoyed the company of elderly folks since she was a child. Now, as an adult, Gina worked taking care of them. She had seen so much heartache. The physical suffering was bad enough, but it was the emotional suffering like abandonment and loneliness that hurt them the most.

In the past year, there had been several elderly folks in Gina's church who had succumbed to poor health and were no longer able to attend services. Gina genuinely missed seeing their faces in church on Sunday morning. She began to pray for the folks she missed, and the more she prayed, the greater her burden became. Her burden began to expand beyond the boundaries of her church and extended to the elderly folks who needed to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit was at work in Gina's heart. Surely she wasn't the only one in her church who saw the need for outreach in this area. Gina spoke with her pastor, and with his prayer and support, she launched a visitation and outreach program for the elderly in her community. The outreach team found that some of the elderly folks wanted to hear nothing about a Savior or the gift of salvation. They began to pray that the Holy Spirit would soften those hardened hearts and that He would empower them in their ministry. One by one, lost souls were led to Christ—not only the elderly but their family members and caregivers as well.

Today's story illustrates how the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, at work in one faithful heart, can reach out to lost, hurting souls and unite a community.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17, KJV).

KJV

Luke 2:36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Acts 21:8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

NLT

Luke 2:36 Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years.

37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer.

38 She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

Acts 2:16 No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

17 'In the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.

18 In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy.

19 And I will cause wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below—blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

20 The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives.

21 But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.'

Acts 21:8 The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food.

9 He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

People, Places, and Times

Upper Room Women. Jesus instructed His followers to go to Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They obeyed and 120 men and women assembled in the Upper Room. The Scripture clearly states that certain women were included in this number. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was mentioned by name (Acts 1:14) and the wives of the apostles (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:5). Also, in this assembly were the female followers of Jesus devoted to Him throughout His ministry (Luke 8:2–3). So, when the Holy Spirit came, He fell on men and women, just as Joel prophesied.

Pentecost. Celebrated fifty days after Passover, Pentecost was also called the "Feast of Harvest" and the "Feast of First Fruits" (Leviticus 23:5–21). Pentecost is also celebrated as Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks, which celebrates Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Christians celebrate Pentecost as a commemoration of the outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit. While Shavuot also represents the Jews being freed from slavery to Egypt, Pentecost represents humankind being freed from slavery to sin.

What has God freed you from and how do you share that redemption with others?

Background

Joseph and Mary carried the baby Jesus into the Temple in Jerusalem to fulfill two Jewish ceremonial obligations: the redemption of the firstborn and the purification of the mother after childbirth (Exodus 13:2; Numbers 8:17; 18:14-16; Leviticus 12:1-8). There they met the prophets Simeon and Anna.

Thirty-three years after these prophets proclaimed their message about Christ, another prophet's words were fulfilled when both men and women played a significant part in the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit had been active since the beginning of time, throughout the Old Testament, and during Jesus' ministry. However, after the Day of Pentecost, the role of the Holy Spirit expanded. The power of God's Spirit equips the believer to live the Christian life and carry out Christ's mission (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Acts 21 states that Paul and his company stayed with Philip the evangelist and his four daughters for some time. The daughters, each called prophetess, and their father may have given Luke (the author of Luke and Acts), information about their ministry and the spreading of the Good News in Caesarea and the surrounding areas.

While Anna and Philip's daughters have only a small mention, we will always remember them because they are in Scripture. What act of Christlike goodness will you always remember?

At-A-Glance

1. A Woman Called to Declare the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38)
2. All Believers Called to be Filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-21)
3. Women called to Prophecy (Acts 21:8-9)

In Depth

1. A Woman Called to Declare the Messiah (Luke 2:36-38) The Gospel of Luke highlights a prophetess named Anna, from the Israelite tribe of Asher. Anna's husband died after seven years of marriage. Afterward, she devoted the rest of her long life in absolute surrender to God. Faithfully, she prayed, fasted, and served in the Temple in Jerusalem. Anna was so devoted that she "departed not from the temple" (v. 37), where she was certain to gain great knowledge and experience in God's ways.

Anna longed to see the Messiah's face. God granted her heart's desire when Mary and Joseph walked into the Temple with the baby Jesus. Anna immediately recognized the long-awaited Messiah. She praised and thanked God for allowing her to see Jesus and witness the unfolding of the messianic prophecies. Anna, inspired by the Holy Spirit, spoke boldly about the coming Messiah, declaring the baby Jesus is, in fact, the promised one bringing salvation and redemption.

2. All Believers Called to be Filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-21) On the Day of Pentecost, Peter addressed the crowd in Jerusalem. He clarified that it was the partial fulfillment of Joel's prophecy as it pertained to the church (Joel 2:28-29). Christians are now God's temple, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). At one time the operation of the Spirit was most prominently recorded as the revelation to a few people and one particular nation—Israel. Today God connects and communicates His desires through people in every walk of life, not merely through the Jewish leadership. Following the Day of Pentecost, people from all nations, cultures, and people groups regardless of gender, race, and social status can be filled with the Holy Spirit, empowered to speak out God's words. Both young and old; men and women; those who might be considered as insignificant and those who are high ranking in society; the educated, the unlearned; the rich and the poor can be recipients of God's divine salvation and filled with His Spirit. While Joel also predicted changes in the physical atmosphere, those signs will be fulfilled in the end times (Revelation 6:12, 8:12).

In what way was Joel's prophecy seen on the day of Pentecost? What aspects of his prophecy will be deferred?

3. Women Called to Prophecy (Acts 21:8-9) Philip was one of the first seven deacons (Acts 6:1-6). He witnessed to an Ethiopian eunuch and then the Holy Spirit led him to Azotus where he preached in Caesarea and the surrounding area (Acts 8:26-40). Twenty years later, Philip continued to reside in Caesarea (Acts 21:8-9).

Paul, Luke, and eight others visited Philip whose four unmarried, virgin daughters lived with him. Some scholars believe their unmarried status was an indication of their solidarity and devotion to the Lord (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:34). The Scripture offers no extensive details about these four prophetesses. They are unnamed and nothing was recorded about their mother or specific involvement in ministry except that they prophesied. Philip committed himself to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, boldly talking about Christ. As is often seen even today, when parents are involved in ministry their children are likely to be involved as well.

Search the Scriptures

1. How does the mention of Anna, the women in Acts 2, and Philip's daughters contribute to Jesus' ministry? (Luke 2:38, Acts 1:14, Acts 21:8).
2. Who were the recipients of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-17)?
3. What was Anna's message and to whom did she prophesy (Luke 2:38)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. How is Anna a role model for men and women?
2. How do you account for the unity of men and women in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14; 2:21)?
3. Why did Luke see the mention of Phillip's daughters as significant?

Liberating Lesson

Some churches and denominations debate women's roles in the furtherance of the Gospel. How do the passages in today's lesson address this issue?

Application for Activation

The statements regarding women in today's passages, declare the role of women in speaking out as the Spirit of the Lord divinely inspires. Have you ever felt the urgency of speaking in faith under God's Word? How did you respond? What was the result? Seek God for the boldness to speak in favor of the Gospel.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do?

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned?

Say It Correctly

Phanuel. **FAH**-noo-ell.

Azotus. **AH**-zoe-tuss.

Caesarea. **KYE**-sare-EE-uh.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Jesus Supports Mary's Choice
(Luke 10:38–42)

TUESDAY

Jesus Responds to Sister's Call
(John 11:1–11)

WEDNESDAY

Jesus Raises Lazarus; Mary Believes
(John 11:38–45)

THURSDAY

Women Carry Resurrection
Message to Apostles
(Luke 24:5–10)

FRIDAY

Jesus' Final Words and Ascension
(Luke 24:44–53)

SATURDAY

Simeon Sees Impact of Jesus' Ministry
(Luke 2:28-35)

SUNDAY

The Spirit Empowers
Daughters to Prophecy
(Luke 2:36-38; Acts 2:16-21; 21:8-9)