

Take Another Step — In Faith

Phoebe: Sent on a Mission

Another Step // Study One

In Romans 16:1-2 we read about a woman named Phoebe. “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.” Romans 16:1-2 NIV

Cenchreae was a port city near Corinth. The word “deacon” refers to a role within the leadership community of the church that involved serving the church body. Paul introduces her to the church in Rome likely because Phoebe was the person who brought his letter to them. The Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible says, “Wealthy benefactors helped their cities or other people, who in turn owed them honour. Most benefactors were male, but a number (some estimate 10 percent) were women. Benefactors of religious associations often allowed the latter to meet in the benefactors’ homes. Letters were normally carried by travellers. Phoebe is probably a well-to-do businesswoman traveling on business; Corinth and Rome had close trade ties.”

Phoebe was living her ordinary life - working in her career while serving as a leader within in her church. Yet she was, then, chosen to be the one to carry the letter to the Romans that we now have as a part of our Bibles.

Discuss:

- *What do you notice about Phoebe’s story? What led her to taking another step, a step that turned out to be incredibly significant?*
- *In what ways do you relate to Phoebe’s story? In what ways have you taken steps in serving your church community and move forward in all aspects of your your life this year? As you’ve endeavoured to incorporate service into your daily life, what opportunities and challenges have you encountered?*
- *How might you, right now, take another step in obedience to Jesus? Sometimes we’re the last people to see how faithfulness in our ordinary lives positions us to be used by God. Take a moment to encourage about ways that you see God’s faithfulness in THEIR lives.*

Digging Deeper

The word translated “deacon” is used many times in the New Testament. In the NIV it is most often translated as “servant” (Mark 9:35, Colossians 1:23-25), then “minister” (1 Timothy 4:6), and finally “deacon” (1 Timothy 3:8,12). Read those examples and notice how the word is used.

- *What does that word’s usage say about the role of a leader within the church? Now think about yourself – in what ways can you continue to step forward as a healthy servant of the body of Christ?*