

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 9/9/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

If JESUS had such positive feelings about and uplifted women many times during HIS ministry, why didn't HE have any women as disciples? There are many encounters between JESUS and women in the Bible. Indeed, JESUS often elevated women to a place of equality with men. Yet, HE didn't have any women disciples. Why?

To begin with, when JESUS chose HIS first disciples, we are very familiar with the fact that HE chose twelve. Normally, a rabbi would have about four or five disciples in his school. So, twelve was unusual. Yet, the number sent a message that JESUS had come to the twelve tribes of Israel—the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. JESUS ministry was to begin with the Jewish nation where it was at historically and contextually. And that was as a patriarchal society. Men were dominant over women and were often viewed as chattel or property of their husbands. Women rarely were able to own land or own businesses. This was the society in which JESUS began HIS earthly ministry.

But as HE moved into that ministry in earnest, JESUS began to offer a new vision for the Kingdom of GOD. Very early on, that included his advancement of women through HIS interactions with them and defense of them. This elevation of women continued with whom HE allowed in HIS rabbinic following. Luke 8 tells us that, *“JESUS traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of GOD. The Twelve were with HIM, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out, Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna, and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.”* The women listed here by name and others joined the Twelve (again making sure everyone knows they represent all Israel) in ministering to and supporting people with JESUS. Though not initially included in the first twelve disciples, women became part of JESUS' rabbinic following and ministry and can certainly be considered HIS disciples.

It is also worth mentioning, in terms of JESUS' vision for women in the Kingdom of GOD, one HIS most intentional actions. When JESUS rose from the dead, the first person to whom HE appeared, the person HE chose to carry the announcement of the good news of the resurrection was a woman, Mary Magdalene. JESUS could have appeared to anyone HE wished and HIS appearance in the locked room was evidence that HE could have appeared wherever HE wished. But, according to John's gospel, JESUS chose Mary. It's also of note, that when she sees JESUS, she calls him “Rabboni” in Hebrew, which means “rabbi” and is what a disciple would call her or his teacher. JESUS chooses a woman to be the one to share the greatest message in the world! It may not have been as formal as the choosing of the Twelve, but women were certainly played prominent roles amongst JESUS disciples.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey