

Jesus' Approach To Ministry

From the start of Jesus' ministry He traveled throughout the land of Galilee, Samaria, Idumea and Judea. He was raised in the city of Nazareth. After He moved His mother, brothers and sisters to Capernaum, Capernaum became their new home town. It was the city where Peter, James, John, and Andrew lived too! It was the city from which He would depart and return. It was the center of His ministry. It was there that John the Baptist's disciples questioned Jesus about His mission and His identity. It was there that Jesus performed many miracles and then sent John's two disciples back to their teacher with proof that He was the Messiah (Luke 7:18-22). It was there He explained to the crowd why John was in prison and why the religious leaders were opposed to John and to Himself. It was there that He warned the crowd about their religious leaders and had a dinner with a group of those leaders. It was there that a female prostitute uncontrolably wept all over His feet and repeatedly dried them with her hair. Capernaum was a place of family, friends, crowds, seekers, enemies and supporters. It is the city in which this study (Luke 8:1-3) begins.

TRAVELING AGAIN. Soon after the eventful dinner with the Jewish religious leaders and the unexpected female prostitute, Jesus left Capernaum once again traveling from city-to-city and town-to-town.

Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him . . . (NASB) Luke 8:1

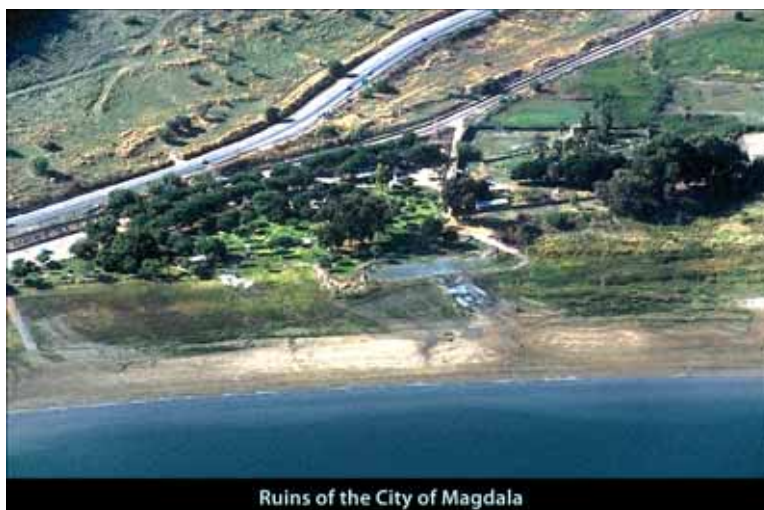
The gospel of Luke tells us that in each city He was proclaiming and preaching the good news about the Kingdom of Heaven. The Greek word translated as "proclaim" is a present active participle. This means that Jesus repeatedly was proclaiming and preaching. We have discovered in the previous studies that Jesus' typical pattern was to visit a synagogue on the Sabbath, or Saturday, and teach (Luke 4:16-19, 31-37). The apostle Paul did the same thing (Acts

13:14-15; 17:17; 18:4, 19; 19:8).

JESUS' PRIORITY. It is revealing to notice what the gospels never tell us about Jesus' ministry. We are never told that Jesus led the crowds in singing praise songs or hymns. We are never told about a choir, a pastoral prayer, announcements, a skit, or an offering plate. These elements so familiar to our churches services today are never mentioned as a part of His public ministry. While there is nothing wrong with these activities, it is important to notice that Jesus was focused on two priorities: healing and teaching. He would heal the people to attract their attention and demonstrate His love and mercy, and then He would teach. Sometimes

healing is never mentioned; only teaching is mentioned. That is the situation in this passage. Teaching God's Word was the priority of His ministry.

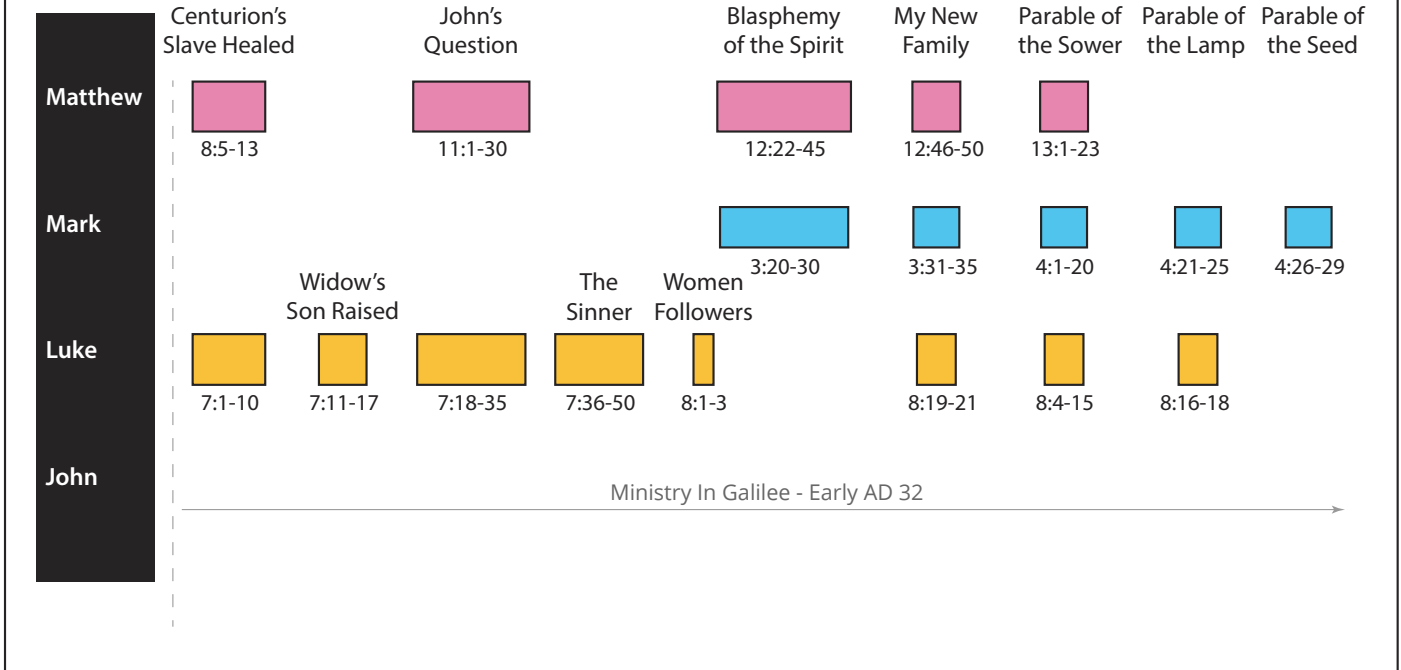
God's divine pattern for ministry was modeled by Jesus. He placed the teaching of God's Word first in priority. It



Ruins of the City of Magdala

Life and Heart of Jesus

Ministry In Galilee



is interesting that music is never mentioned in the gospels as being part of His ministry to the crowds. Yet, music has a very high priority in many churches while the teaching of the Bible often has lost priority. Today, music is sometimes given more time than the teaching of the Bible. Have you ever visited a church where the teaching of the Bible was thirty minutes or less but the worship service was one hour or more? If that describes your church, where is the priority of teaching?

When the Word of God is taught, Jesus should be the central focus because He is the central focus of scripture.

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (NASB) Luke 24:44

There was a sign attached to the pulpit of the great historic Church of the Open Door in downtown Los Angeles. The church no longer exists in that location, but the reminder of that sign still lives. The sign was posted on top of the pulpit

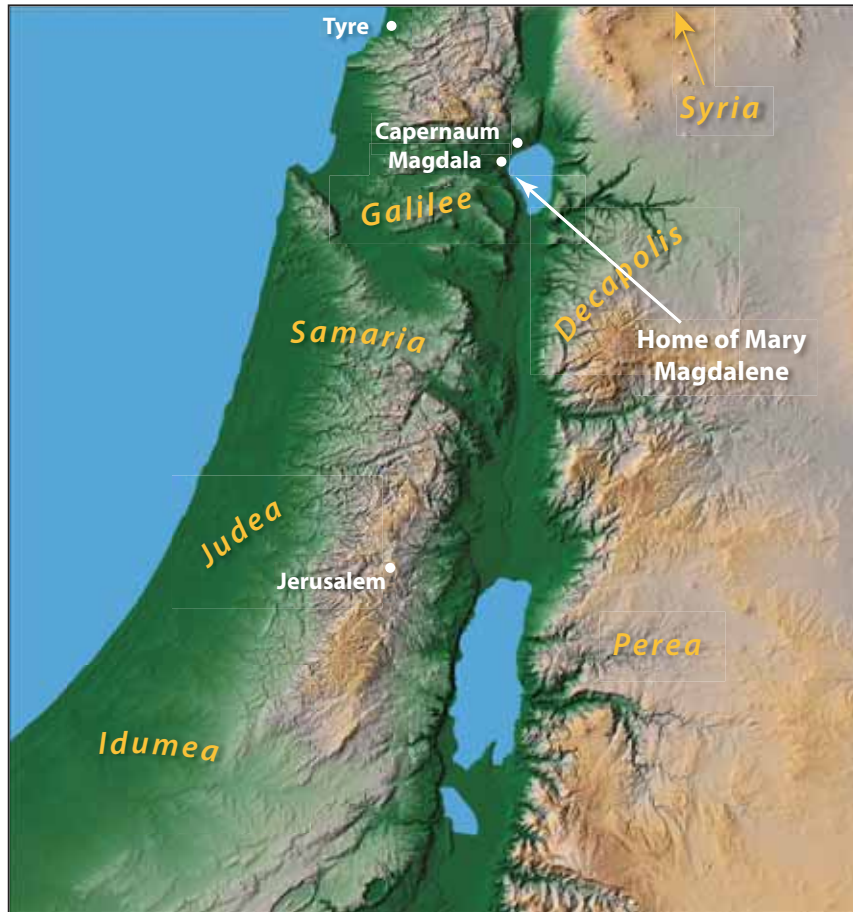
where every preacher could see it before and while he was speaking. It read, "Sir, we would see Jesus!" Everything else was and is a second priority. The priority ministry is to teach the Word of God and the priority subject is Jesus Christ.

THE DISCIPLES. The last part of Luke 8:1 tells us that the twelve disciples were following Jesus. Jesus had selected them and now they were in training. They were following Jesus from city to city and town to town. Jesus' training methodology for these future leaders was not confined to a Bible study using a book published by some famous rabbi, attending a conference for Jewish leaders, listening to a CD or DVD by some motivational Greek or Roman speaker, or participating in a course about the organizational policies and strategies of church growth. Jesus' practical approach was that they must spend time with Him. They must follow Him.

Discipleship training can be enhanced with a good book focused on elders, deacons and the church.¹ But completion

¹ The following books are recommended to be used in the training of current and potential church leaders: 1) John MacArthur. The Master's Plan for the Church. Moody Press.

of such a book study does not mean that a man is spiritually qualified to become an elder. About two years ago a church leader told me that he had completed a book study with a man that he hoped would be an elder some day. He said that the man had faithfully studied the book and attended the meetings. This leader felt that the man was now ready to become an elder. Unfortunately, this church leader did not understand that



something more was required than just reading a book about elders and the church. Spiritual maturity and a solid working knowledge of doctrine are also required (1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9). An elder must be able to teach and must be able to defend the faith. In fact, a man who is spiritually qualified, doctrinally sound, and satisfies the godly requirements found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 is qualified according to scripture.

Jesus selection of the twelve men (John 15:16) came after He spoke with the Father (Luke 6:12; John 17:24). Jesus looked for godly character first. After they were selected, their training began. It started by watching Jesus heal, hearing Him teach, and on occasions being rebuked for their ignorance and sin. Later Jesus gave them some practical expe-

1991; 2) John MacArthur. *The Book on Leadership*. Nelson Books., 2004; 3) John MacArthur. *Twelve Ordinary Men*. W. Publishing Group. 2002; 4) Gene Getz. *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*. Moody Press; 5) Gene Getz. *Elders and Leaders Book* (www.ccbt.org); 6) Alexander Strauch. *Biblical Eldership*. Lewis and Roth Publishers; and 7) Alexander Strauch. *The New Testament Deacon*. Lewis and Roth Publishers.

rience. The practical experience will be coming in our future studies.

True discipleship of leaders is designed to shape and mold a person even after being selected. So the twelve disciples followed Jesus as He went from city-to-city and town-to-town. They left their families, friends and jobs. They were training to become the Master's undershepherds.

THE WOMEN.

The next two verses are significant. They

indicate that some women were also following Jesus during this trip.

... and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means. (NASB) Luke 8:2-3

The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Susanna, and some others who are not named. Some believe that Mary Magdalene was the woman in our last study and that she was a prostitute. But we discovered in Luke 7:36-50 that the passage does not give us any information about the identity of that woman at all. Contrary to popular opinion, Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute. Luke 8:2 tells us that Mary Magdalene had been possessed with seven demons. If both accounts are about the same woman, why mention Mary Magdalene's name in one pas-

sage and not the other? Here we are told in clear terms that Mary had been demon possessed. It is an injustice to assume that she was a prostitute. Mary was from the city of Magdala which was located near the Sea of Galilee. Therefore, she was named Mary Magdalene.

Joanna was the wife of Chuza. Historical tradition indicates that her husband had a significant position within King Herod's kingdom as his steward. But tradition says that he lost his position because his wife was telling others about Jesus. Joanna and Chuza suffered because Jesus Christ was rejected by others.

Neither the scriptures nor historical tradition reveal anything about Susanna. This is the only place she is found in the scriptures. Who were the other women? We do not know. Some of them could have been women who were also at the foot of the cross when Jesus died. Matthew 27:55-56 says that Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of James and John were at the cross while Jesus was hanging on it. Mark adds that Salome was at the foot of the cross and John 19:25-26 says that Jesus' mother was there along with Mary, the wife of Clopas. Were some of these women part of the "many others"?

THE MINISTRY TEAM. According to Luke 8:2-3, these women provided financial support for Jesus and His disciples. Jesus, the twelve disciples, and a small group of women traveled together. How often did they travel together? We do not know. This is the first time such a statement has been made in our study of the gospels. But it is clear that on this trip the women were part of Jesus' ministry team. Jesus was the spiritual leader; the twelve disciples were in training, and the women helped to provide some of the financial support. Some of the women were probably family members and relatives.

Some claim that these women provided sexual favors for Jesus and the apostles. Such statements are without any merit. There are no secular or religious historical records or statements in the gospels that support such a claim. Such statements are pure imagination. In fact, the gospels reveal that Jesus preached against sexual immorality, and He was considered to be holy. Any such sexual sins would have become public knowledge and destroyed His ministry.

It is also important to note that Jewish writings accused Jesus of performing miracles by sorcery or demonic powers,² stated that He was hanged or crucified on a cross,³ that He died at the age of 33 or 34,⁴ and claimed that His body was stolen from the grave and dragged through the streets of Jerusalem.⁵ But they never accused Him of leading a sexually immoral life. Surely, they would not have missed such an opportunity had it been true. The Jewish leaders hated Jesus and wanted to kill Him (John 7:1).

The gospels directly and honestly state that Jesus was accused of performing His miracles by the power of Satan (Matt. 12:22-32). The Jewish leaders had rejected the fact that Jesus claimed to be God (John 10:33). Therefore, they had to invent some reason why He was able to perform such wonders. The accusations of the religious leaders are not hidden in the gospels. The gospels are honest and forthcoming. The gospels also reveal that Jesus was about 33 or 34 years old when He died (Luke 3:23 plus three or four years for His ministry) and that the Jewish leaders had claimed His body was stolen (Matt. 28:11-15). The written records of the Jewish leaders admit that Jesus performed miracles and wonders and that His body was not in the grave. They could not explain His miracles or wonders except to claim that His miracles were performed through demonic power. They could not explain how He returned to life except to claim that His body was stolen. Their historical records actually admit that He did these things, but they did not want to conclude that He was God.

Is it possible the Jewish religious leaders told the truth? If so, why are the records of the secular historians all positive? For example, Pontius Pilate wrote these words,

At His coming the lame shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the stammerer shall be clear speaking; the blind shall see, and the

2 I. Epstein. The Babylonian Talmud. The Soncino Press. vvol. 3, Sanhedrin 43a. 1935, p. 281.

3 I. Epstein, Ibid.

4 I. Epstein. The Babylonian Talmud. The Soncino Press. vol. 3, Sanhedrin. 106a. 1935, p. 281.

5 Paul L. Maier, First Easter. New Yor: Harper and Row, 1973. pp. 117-118.

lepers shall be cleansed; and the dead shall rise, and walk about.⁶

Why are references to Jesus Christ in the Dead Sea scrolls positive? One scroll refers to Jesus as “the son of God” and the one who was “pierced” and “wounded.”⁷ The negative accusations about Jesus can only be found in the Jewish records. We should also remember the many Old Testament prophecies about Jesus that came true. One amazing prophecy dating from 530 B.C. found in Daniel 9:25-26 specifies the exact year in which the Messiah would die. Jesus died in that week. A prophecy found in Isaiah, dating from 700 B.C., predicted that Jesus would perform miracles,

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy (NIV).” Isa. 35:5-6

Now these are signs from the hand of God. We should also notice that even the Jewish records indirectly admit that Jesus performed miracles and returned to life. They just have a different explanation. Jesus was no ordinary person. He was God. In summary, the testimony from secular sources and the biblical prophecies are positive and only the records of the Jewish leaders are negative. If Jesus was guilty of sexual sins surely the Jewish records would have mentioned it.

Others claim that the women who accompanied Jesus were pastors or spiritual leaders like the twelve disciples. But that view must be rejected for several reasons. First, nowhere in the New Testament is such a statement ever made. Second, no woman was ever mentioned as being one of the twelve disciples and scripture never indicates that Jesus called any women to follow Him as He did the twelve. Third, none of these women are mentioned as being present when the twelve disciples asked Jesus to explain the kingdom parables in Matthew 13. Fourth, there were no women in the boat on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22-36) when Jesus calmed the waves or asked Peter to walk to Him. Fifth, there were no women at the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13) or in the Upper Room (John 13:1-17:26). Finally, the gospel

⁶ Justin Martyr. First Apology 48

⁷ G. R. Jeffrey. The Signature of God. Frontier Research Publications. 1996. p. 99-100.

of Luke was very careful to separate the twelve disciples from the women supporters. That is, the author, Dr. Luke, under the influence of the Holy Spirit mentions the twelve disciples and then separately mentions the women later. Brent E. Kassin makes this comment in the *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*,

... New Testament women functioned in spheres of genuine spiritual service and responsibility in the early New Testament community, such as Joanna, wife of Chuza (Luke 8:1-3) or Lydia at Philippi (Acts 16:11-15), none of the women . . . were ever described in the New Testament as elders, bishops, or pastors-teachers, either ordained or non-ordained.⁸

These women were supporters of the ministry team, and partners in that sense, but they were not considered leaders in the same sense as the twelve disciples.

Luke 20:46-47 seems to indicate that it was common practice for women to financially assist rabbis since Luke describes some religious leaders as taking advantage of some widows. There is solid evidence dating from around A.D. 100 that women did provide financial support to rabbis.⁹ Therefore, we conclude that the conduct of these women was an accepted practice in those ancient days. They were supporting one whom they believed to be their Messiah.

WAS JESUS’ RICH? Some claim that this passage proves Jesus was rich. Here are some quotes,

I don’t know where these goofy traditions creep in at, but one of the goofiest ones is that Jesus and His disciples were poor. Now there’s no Bible to substantiate that.¹⁰

Jesus and the disciples were rich, only rich people could take off for 3.5 years.¹¹

The Bible says that He [Jesus] had a treasurer-a treasury (they

⁸ Brent E. Kassin. When Women Were Priests. Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. 38/4 (December 1995). p. 595.

⁹ Joachim Jeremias. Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. Fortress Press. 1969. p. 113-114.

¹⁰ Was Jesus Poor? (www.letusreason.org/Wf15.htm)

¹¹ Ibid.

called it “the bag”); that they had one man who was the treasurer, named Judas Iscariot; and the rascal was stealing out of the bag for three-and-a-half years and nobody knew that he was stealing. You know why? Because there was so much in it, He couldn’t tell. Nobody could tell that anything was missing..., if Jesus didn’t have anything, what do you need a treasury for? A treasury is for surplus. It’s not for that which you’re spending. It’s only for surplus-to hold it until you need to spend it. Therefore, He must have had a whole lot that needed to be held in advance that He wasn’t spending. So He must have had more than He was living on.¹²

The whole point is I’m trying to get you to see--to get you out of this malaise of thinking that Jesus and the disciples were poor and then relating that to you - thinking that you, as a child of God, have to follow Jesus. The Bible says that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. That’s the reason why I drive a Rolls Royce. I’m following Jesus’ steps.¹³

But the scriptures state otherwise. Luke 2:22-24 reveals that Jesus’ parents were poor, since they offered a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons. According to the Mosaic Law, this offering was allowed for poor families.

In Mark 6:33-44 we discover that Jesus orders His disciples to find some food to feed approximately five thousand men plus women and children. But the disciples indicated that they did not have enough money. They had only 200 denarii. A denarii was the amount of money a person would receive for working in the fields for one day. This means that Jesus and the twelve disciples had only 13 days of money in Judas’ money bag. They were not very rich, and their situation would be worse if the money had to support others.

In Matthew 17:24-27 Peter was asked if Jesus would pay the two-drachma tax. Jesus used the opportunity to teach Peter that he should pay governmental taxes and told him that he could find a shekel in the mouth of a fish in the Sea of Galilee. If Jesus was rich, why go to the lake to find money?

¹² Ibid.

¹³ “Ever Increasing Faith” program on TBN, 9 December 1990. (www.falseteachersexposed.blogspot.com)

The last quote we will explore is as follows:

Jesus was not poor . . . Jesus had a nice house! John 1:38 says that Jesus turned to those that were following him and said, “Come with me.” And they said, “Where dwellest thou?” He said, “Come and see.” And Jesus took that whole crowd home with Him to stay in His house. That meant it was a big house! Jesus wore fine clothes! John 19:23 says, “He had a seamless robe.” Roman soldiers gambled for it at the foot of the cross. It was a designer original! It was valuable enough for them to want it! . . . And then there are Christians that have a poverty complex that says, “Well, I feel guilty about having nice things.” Jesus didn’t!¹⁴

How shall we respond to this quote? First, a careful examination of John 1:38-40 reveals that Jesus invited only two men into His house and not a crowd. A house does not have to be very large for Jesus plus two men. Second, John 19:23 reveals that Jesus had two garments. One was Jesus’ outer garment which was made of four parts. The next garment was seamless. It was worn next to the skin. That is, it was Jesus’ underwear. It is important to note that the soldiers gambled on everything: Jesus’ four piece outer garment and His underwear. This was not designer underwear. Jesus was not rich. In fact, the ministry team appears to have had just enough and nothing more.

CONCLUSION. Jesus’ approach to ministry was simple. He proclaimed and preached the message of the Kingdom of God. Today, we tell others about Jesus Christ and teach the Bible. Jesus had a godly ministry team that supported Him. The team included twelve men who were being trained to take over the ministry when He left. That is a model every church should follow. Train the next set of leaders - elders and pastoral staff - from within and transition them into various ministries over time. Jesus also included godly women in the ministry who provided financial support and most likely encouragement.

Why did God include others in the ministry? Why did He do things this way? He is the only one who knows. He has given us the opportunity to participate in the advancement of His divine kingdom. He wants us to minister according

¹⁴ “Our God is Rich.” (www.livingknowledge.ca/tian/financialSuccess.htm)

to His example. The teaching and preaching of His Word is the priority. The other events in our worship services are incidental and secondary. Discipleship is the next priority. Without it there is no future godly leadership. It is wonderful that Jesus included women in the ministry. He set the example and we should follow the pattern.

Men and women should be given every opportunity to minister within the church. Men and women should use their spiritual gifts together. These gifts include giving, serving, teaching, mercy and organization to name just a few. Women can teach other women and children. Men can teach anyone. Women can serve in any leadership capacity within the church, except as elders. This is God's divine pattern for the church. Jesus set the example and we should follow! We will close with a very insightful comment from Leon Morris,

*It is heart-warming to read of this group of women who supported Jesus and it is worth reflecting that the Gospels record no woman as ever taking action against Him: his enemies were all men.*¹⁵

¹⁵ Leon Morris. "Luke." Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, p. 165.