

## Preparation for Session 11 – Role of Women in the Church

Read Romans 16:1, 2, 7 and I Timothy 3:11 – 13. Read some of the passages before and after these passages in order to gain some idea of context. In this lesson we will address the role of women as deaconesses in the New Testament and how these passages might be applied today.

1. Considerable debate has emerged over the years among churches identified with the Restoration Movement regarding the role (office) of women in the church as deaconesses. Why do you believe this debate has emerged based on your reading of the scripture?
2. Phoebe is referred to as a *diakonos* (or deacon) in Romans 16:1 (the same word used for men appointed to the office of deacon in I Timothy 3:8). Why do you think the word is translated as servant in Romans 16:1 in both the King James version and the New International Version (NIV)?
3. From reading Romans 16, what arguments can you make that would support Phoebe as a holder of a special office? What arguments can you make that Phoebe was being referred to generally as a servant of the church?
4. How does Paul refer to other women listed in Romans 16? What should we make of these distinctions?
5. What does the term “protectoress” imply in Romans 16:1? The term is translated “a great help” in the NIV and “a succourer” in the KJV. The word is only used once in the New Testament, namely to describe Phoebe.

6. Most scholars today believe that the name translated “Junias” in Romans 16:7 is better translated “Junia” or the female equivalent. Do you think that Junia was an apostle? If not, why not? If so, what are the implications?
7. What is the meaning of the term “apostle” in the New Testament?
8. If Paul provides special instructions for deaconesses in the New Testament, where are these instructions found?
9. If Paul is not referring to deaconesses in I Timothy 3:11 – 13, to whom is he referring?
10. If women were appointed as deaconesses in the early church, do you think from your readings that the work of deacons and deaconesses was identical? Do you think deaconesses focused their work exclusively upon the needs of women?
11. Did women in the New Testament church only work separately from men or did they at times work hand in hand with men?

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