

Be Phoebe
A Model for Christian Service
Romans 16:1-2

Josh McDowell, in his new book *The Disconnected Generation*, describes three cries of the post-modern student; (1). love and care, (2). truth to base his/her life on, and (3). a model to follow. Everyone benefits from others who model ideal qualities in their lives. Romans 16 is filled with such models for Christian living. Forty persons are mentioned by name as Paul greets individuals who have impacted his life for the cause of Christ, and gives his thanks to others who have helped the church at Rome. The first person listed in this hall of faith is a lady by the name of Phoebe. In order to “be Phoebe” you must . . .

I. Be A Risk Taker . . . *“I commend unto you Phoebe . . . that ye receive her”* (vs.1-2). Though Paul would eventually be imprisoned in Rome twice and ultimately martyred there, when Paul wrote Romans he had never been to Rome. Paul wrote this letter in 57 A.D. during his second visit to Corinth. At the church at Corinth was a lady named Phoebe. It has been assumed by scholars throughout the century that Phoebe had been sent by Paul and the Corinthian church to Rome to deliver the letter we call Romans. Think about the journey Phoebe undertook for Christ. **She would go by ship from Corinth, south to Crete, west around the tip of Italy, eventually coming to Rome.** This was quite a feat for a woman in the days of Paul. The skeptic Renan said of her, *“she carried beneath the folds of her robe the whole future of Christian theology.”* God did not call His people to a life of comfort. He calls His people to step out into the sea of adventure and do those things that others might find difficult to accept. *“The fact that a Christian is uncertain does not mean he is insecure”* **John Blanchard.**

II. Be A Disciple Maker . . . *“she hath been a succorer of many”* (v.2). The word “succorer” in the KJV is translated “helper” or “provider” as well. This Greek word was the official title for a citizen in Athens who had the responsibility of seeing to the welfare of resident aliens who were without civil rights. Among the Jews it signified a wealthy patron of the community. This descriptive phrase of Phoebe gives us some insight into her relationships with others. She took it upon herself to be a “helper” of others. She lived not for herself but for others. Nothing greater could be said of a Christian man or woman than that he/she makes disciples.

III. Be A Custom Shaker . . . *“a servant of the church in Cenchrea”* (v.1). The word “servant” is the word “deaconia” from which we get our word “deacon.” Phoebe was a deaconess in the church at Corinth. In a male dominated world, in a church made of many men, Phoebe broke through many cultural barriers and served the people of God. The phrase “you can’t do that” meant nothing to Phoebe. She served God because she had a higher calling than that offered by the world.

Phoebe is the first of many model Christian people we will examine in Romans 16. Be Phoebe. As you go through this life be a risk taker; be a disciple maker; be a custom shaker. You will be amazed what God does in and through you when you do.