

Women Serving Jesus

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How do you travel on business? How much preparation do you make? What do you pack for the trip? How do you travel around on your trip? In modern western life, making a business trip usually calls for lots of preparation and a careful scheduling of our itinerary in order to get all our work done efficiently and successfully. Careful planning and execution of those plans are considered essential to conducting business.



In Luke 8:1-3, we see Jesus taking a 'business trip' throughout Galilee. In Luke's summary narrative here he describes a preaching tour of Galilee by Jesus. But Jesus didn't go alone. He had traveling companions who went with him. Interestingly, these included both men and women, some of who were married and traveled without their husbands being along.

Probably in that ancient Jewish world as well as in our day, this "raised eyebrows" among some people who saw in this mixed group of men and women a traveling group that at best went again established social custom of the time. Jewish men didn't even speak to married Jewish women in public, other than their own wife. For a Jewish man to travel around the countryside with another man's wife was certainly suspect and a radical departure from accepted standards. Some of the women in the group were unmarried and this carried its own question marks in the eyes of some people. To be sure, such a mixed gender traveling group was more acceptable in 'liberal' Galilee than it would have been in 'conservative' Judea. But even among the more progressive minded Galileans, to see such a group coming into town would have raised some questions



Out of this summary narrative comes numerous insights about the nature of Jesus' public ministry and the contributions of both men and women to that ministry.

I. Context

External History. Regarding the compositional history of the Gospel of Luke, let me summarize a lot of Lukan scholarship by the following. William Beard in the *Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (iPreach online) summarizes the basic issue this way:

With the acceptance of this early church tradition -- although not all do and since the gospel itself makes no effort internally to identify its author -- then the issue becomes trying to locate a setting for the writing of this gospel. Again Bill Beard summarizes quite effectively these questions:

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assumes the traditional authorship and bears the same burdens. Perhaps all we can say is that the gospel was written from some locale where Greek was the primary language and where cultured readers like Theophilus (1:3) would be at home."

According to [Luke 1:1-4](#), this gospel -- and subsequently the book of Acts (cf. [Acts 1:1](#)) -- was dedicated to a Theophilus who as a patron supported the cost of producing these documents as well as the making of copies of them for distribution to various Christian communities in the late first century world. Evidently [Theophilus](#) was a wealthy Roman who had become a Christian and wanted to contribute to the spread of Christianity by supporting Luke's writing of these two documents. The gospel preface ([Lk 1:4](#)) suggests the purpose of the document was "so that

you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed."

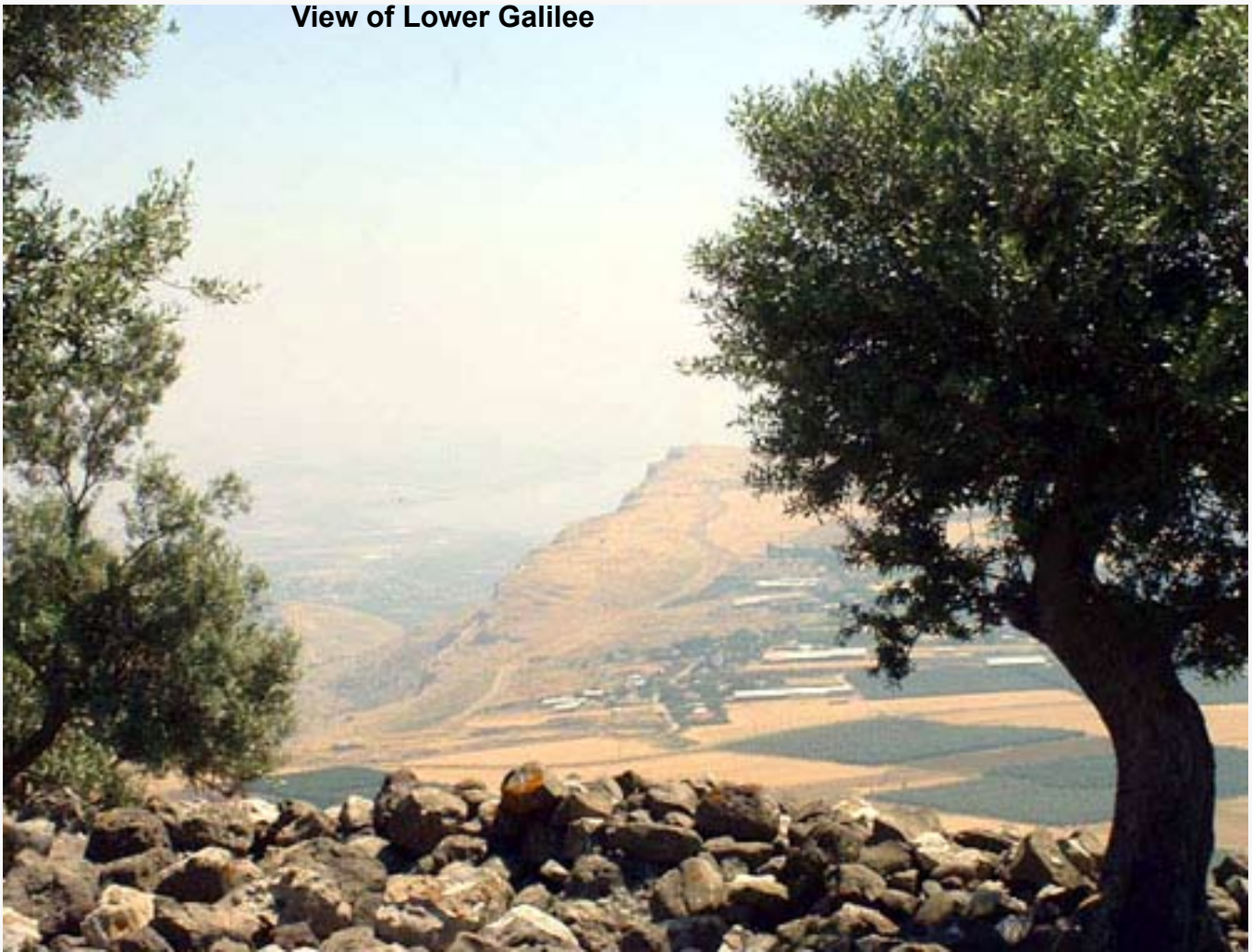
The Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts together stand as a two volume testimony of the beginning of the Christian religion with its founder, Jesus Christ, and the first three decades of the beginning of this movement in its spread from Jerusalem to Rome from AD 30 to AD 61. The author was closely associated with the apostle Paul. For the gospel account Luke made use of a variety of sources, as he indicated in [Lk 1:1-3](#), since he was not personally present with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Modern scholarship generally concludes that among these sources are the gospels of Mark and perhaps also Matthew, although more likely the material in Luke, that is also found in Matthew, may very well

be drawn from a common, unknown source. That is generally called the Q document from the German word Quelle meaning source. Thus with at least Mark and Q in front of him, along with notes from interviews with various people around the earthly Jesus, Luke set out to tell his story of Jesus in a way that would enhance understanding of the enormous significance of this Jewish carpenter from the little village of Nazareth in the northern Palestinian province of Galilee. As best as we can determine, this happened sometime in the 70s or perhaps in the early 80s of the first Christian century, possibly while Luke was living in Rome.

Internal History. The time and place markers in 8:1-3 are somewhat limited because of the Summary Narrative nature of the text. From the surrounding context one can determine that the towns and villages mentioned in verse one were



View of Lower Galilee



located in the Roman province of Galilee. Eric Meyes contributes this summation:²

Galilee (gal'i-lee; Heb. galil), the region of northern Palestine that is situated between the Litani River in modern Lebanon and the Jezreel Valley in modern Israel. The designation 'Galilee' first occurs as a proper name in Joshua (20:7; 21:32) and in Chronicles (1 Chron. 6:76) in reference to the site of Qadesh of Naphtali. It occurs with the definite article in 1 Kings 9:11, 'in the land of Galilee.' From Isa. 9:1 we learn it was known as a land of foreigners. The proper name occurs regularly in the writings of the first century historian Josephus and the nt (Gk. galilaia).

This tiny region, approximately forty-five miles long north to south, is first mentioned by Pharaoh Thutmose III in 1468 b.c. when he captured twenty-three Canaanite cities there. From the time of the Israelite settlement (late thirteenth-early twelfth century b.c.) Galilee is associated with the tribes of Naphtali, Asher, Issachar, and Zebulun; the tribe of

Dan eventually moved there. The reorganization into administrative districts under King David saw a consolidation of Israelite presence there. King Solomon, however, returned some twenty Galilean cities to Hiram, king of Tyre, in payment for building materials (1 Kings 9:10-11).

During the period of the Divided Monarchy (924-586 b.c.) Galilee was invaded by Pharaoh Shishak in 924 b.c. in the fifth year of Rehoboam. In ca. 885 during the reign of Israel's King Baasha, Ben-hadad of Damascus captured Ijon, Dan, Able-beth-maacah, and 'all the land of Naphtali' (1 Kings 15:18-20). The confrontation of Ahab, king of Israel, with Shalmaneser III of Assyria at Qarqar in 853 b.c. ultimately led to the confrontation at Mt. Carmel in 841. Tiglath-pileser III, also of Assyria, however, took much of Galilee in 732 b.c. when he captured thirteen of its cities (2 Kings 15:29) and united it to Assyria as a province. From then on Galilee as a region became known as the Assyrian province of Megiddo. Galilee's history remains obscure until the Greek conquest by Alexander the Great in 332 b.c.

Jewish settlement in Galilee followed the Maccabean revolt in 164 b.c. Galilee was annexed by Judah

²Paul J. Achtemeier, Publishers Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Includes Index., 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 329. Sv. "Galilee," by Eric M. Meyers.

Aristobolus I in 104 b.c. His brother and successor Alexander Jannaeus further extended the borders of Galilee during his reign. With the Roman conquest of Palestine in 63 b.c. Pompey recaptured many Galilean cities and incorporated them into a new Roman administration. Under Herod the Great (40-4 b.c.), Galilee, together with Judea and Perea, formed a large portion of the new Judea. Upon Herod's death in 4 b.c. Galilee and Perea were made part of the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, his son.

Galilee constitutes the area in which Jesus conducted the major part of his ministry. His youth and early ministry took place in Nazareth in Lower Galilee; much of his public ministry was located at the north-western end of the Sea of Galilee, at Capernaum, which was known as Jesus' own city (Matt. 9:1). Galilee is also the area in which Judaism assumed its definitive form, ultimately producing the Mishnah and Palestinian Talmud there.

The first-century historian Josephus (Life 45.235) maintains that there were 204 villages in all Galilee. Archaeology has shown that that figure is not improbable. In Lower Galilee the major centers in the first centuries a.d. were Tiberias and Sepphoris. In Upper Galilee, called Tetracomia ('Four Villages') by

Josephus, Gush Halav (Gischala) and Meiron were certainly among the largest villages. Jewish population in both areas of Galilee, however, did not fully accelerate till after the two devastating wars with Rome in a.d. 66-73 and 132-135. It was in the aftermath of these debacles that Jews as well as Christians relocated themselves there.

Thus, in Jesus' day the very dense population, especially in Lower Galilee, provided optimum opportunity to travel short distances and yet touch many lives of people. With their more open cultural traditions and customs than in Judea, the people would be more receptive to his preaching. Thus in a relatively short period of time Jesus could make a major impact on a large number of people.

Luke's typical use of the Greek imperfect tense verbs in this sentence provides only a signal of extended duration of time. But no temporal adverbs are present to specify how long that time continued. Probably we're looking at a period of several weeks to a few months of activity being capsuled by Luke into a short summary.

b. Literary

Genre. The broad genre label is that of 'gospel.' As has been mentioned many times in various studies done on passages in one of the four gospels, this ancient literary form is distinctive to early Christianity. It reflects elements of both ancient history and biography, but stands apart from both of them in distinctive fashion. The gospel writers were mainly concerned to tell the story of Jesus from a religious advocacy point of view. Modern insistence on objective, factual history were not a part of their concerns. This doesn't imply a disregard for historical accuracy, but does suggest that their priorities lay elsewhere. As discussed under [External History](#) above, the Lukan Prologue in 1:1-4 indicates that Luke had carefully checked out all his sources and information that he used in the writing of his gospel. But his stated purpose was to present Jesus to Theophilus "so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed." Theophilus needed an accurate theological understanding of Jesus, and Luke sought to present it to him, and to other readers.

As alluded to above under the Historical Context, these verses comprise a Summary Narrative. Luke wrote his two volume account of Jesus and the early church using two basic narrative building blocks of material. Many of his narratives are episodic narra-

tives, i.e., the narrative depicts a single event taking place. But interwoven among these episodes are occasional Summary Narratives. Here Luke pauses in order to capsule events over an extended period of time into a short summation. Typically, such narratives capture the basic activities of Jesus over the intended period of time. Often Luke presents an idealized portrait of activities as an example for his readers to imitate.

Literary Context. The literary setting for 8:1-3 is significant. This summary narrative introduces a major section of the Lukan gospel in chapters eight and nine. I. Howard Marshall summarizes:³

After the long section of non-Markan material in which he has described the teaching of Jesus and his compassionate ministry (6:12-49; 7:1-50), Luke now proceeds to a further section of his Gospel in which a description of the teaching of Jesus is followed by an account of his mighty works (8:1-21, 22-56). In this pattern he is governed by the presentation in Mk., whose contents he now follows until 9:50 when the use of other sources again begins. In his use of Mk. Luke had reached Mk. 3:19. He omits Mk. 3:20-30 at this point, since there will be a similar narrative later (11:14-26; based on Q material), and he transfers Mk.

³I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke : A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Includes Indexes., The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter [Eng.: Paternoster Press, 1978]), 314-315.

Just as on previous occasions Luke has indicated that Jesus had companions who heard what he had to say and were witnesses of his mighty deeds, so at the beginning of this new section we are reminded that the Twelve were with him; alongside them are named various women who also formed part of the travelling band. With these companions Jesus set about a further systematic campaign of evangelism in the countryside, with the accent on the spoken word (in view of what is to follow immediately in 8:4-18). It is clear that the purpose of the paragraph for Luke is to

Thus we can catch here an overview of the next several episodes in Jesus' Galilean ministry. The Lord traveled throughout Galilee preaching the Kingdom of God. He was assisted and supported by the Twelve and the women in this ministry.

Literary Structure. The single sentence contained in these verses breaks down into two natural units of material. For technical details on the Greek text, see the [Block Diagram](#) and [Summary of the Rhetorical Structure](#) at the end of this study. These emphases focus on Jesus and those who traveled with him. Major emphasis is given to the women who were a part of the group.

lee. This is one of only two uses of this verb in the entire Greek New Testament, the other one being in Acts 17:1.⁵ Thus Luke indicates an extensive trip by Jesus and his helpers.

An itinerate ministry by Jesus throughout Galilee is a theme in the Synoptic Gospels, and at this point in the Lukan texts comes center stage. As John Nolland points out:⁶

The itinerant nature of Jesus' ministry has not been specifically commented on by Luke since 4:43–44, though it is clear that Jesus has made appearances in a variety of locations (e.g., 5:1, 12; 7:1, 11). Luke now brings Jesus' itineration into prominence by creating in 8:1–3 a framework statement for the next major section of his narrative (8:1–9:20). The use of καθεξῆς, "in what follows," reminds the reader of Luke's concern (expressed in 1:3



⁵15.21 διοδεύω; διαπορεύομαι; διέρχομαι: to travel around through an area, with the implication of both extensive and thorough movement throughout an area—'to travel around through, to journey all through.'

διοδεύω: αὐτὸς διώδευεν κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην κηρύσσων 'he travelled through the towns and villages preaching' Lk 8.1.

διαπορεύομαι: ὡς δὲ διεπορεύοντο τὰς πόλεις 'as they went through the towns' Ac 16.4; διεπορεύετο κατὰ πόλεις καὶ κώμας διδάσκων 'he went through towns and villages teaching' Lk 13.22.

διέρχομαι: διήρχοντο κατὰ τὰς κώμας εὐαγγελιζόμενοι 'they travelled around throughout the villages preaching the good news' Lk 9.6; διελθόντες δὲ ὅλην τὴν νῆσον ἄχρι Πάφου 'when they had travelled throughout the entire island, they came to Paphos' Ac 13.6.

In order to express the meaning of διοδεύω, διαπορεύομαι, and διέρχομαι in these types of contexts, it may be necessary in some languages to say 'he went from one town to another' or, as in Ac 13.6, 'he travelled to all the places on the island' or '... to the various towns on the island.'

[source= Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible societies, 1996, c1989), 1:184.]

⁶John Nolland, vol. 35A, *Word Biblical Commentary : Luke 1:1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 365.

by the use of the same term) for an account which is coherently organized in relation to its overall sense. In the present pericope this concern for order surfaces clearly in Luke's introduction of the accompanying women in vv 2–3. In Luke's Markan source, by contrast, we only learn that such women have been part of Jesus' company after the fact in the report of Jesus' execution (Mark 15:40–41). "Preaching and announcing the good news of the kingdom of God" echoes the language of 4:43–44 (see there). Since for Luke the ministry of the apostles is an extension and continuation of Jesus' own ministry (cf. at 5:1–11), the statement here concerning Jesus' itinerant preaching ministry is already preparing for 9:1–6. In the section 5:1–6:16, apostolic partners for Jesus have been established, but since their choice in 6:12–16 (see there), they have played no visible role in Luke's narrative. Now Luke makes good this deficit.

Jesus felt compelled to impact as many people as possible throughout Galilee. Capernaum on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee was the largest town in Galilee, and became something of a home base for him with Peter's home being located there and serving as the nearest thing to a 'headquarters' for his ministry. But by traveling relatively short distances, especially in Lower Galilee, he could contact hundreds of people quickly in this very densely populated region of Palestine. Containing a mixture of Jews and non-Jews, although by Jesus' day it

was overwhelmingly Jewish, Lower Galilee offered a large Jewish population largely settled as peasant farmers in small towns and villages.⁷

What did he do on this trip? Luke's answer is simple, Jesus traveled about "proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God" (κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ). Luke's emphasis is upon Jesus' preaching ministry, but his subsequent detailing of activity in the following episodes in 8:4-9:20 highlight healing various individuals as a supporting witness to his preaching.

The two Greek participles κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος stress oral proclamation of a message that is focused on positive content. The coming reign of God in human life Jesus saw as positive and beneficial to people. I. Howard Marshall observes:⁸

The use of κηρύσσω and εὐαγγελίζομαι alongside each other gives a hendiadys: 'preaching the good news of', and corresponds to Matthew's phrase κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (cf. Mk. 1:14). For the kingdom of God as the theme of the message cf. 4:43; 9:2; 16:16; Acts 8:12; Mt. 4:23; 9:35; it will appear almost immediately at 8:10.

Thus Jesus concentrated on the central theme of the Kingdom of God in his preaching ministry. The presence of that powerful reign of God could be graphically observed by bystanders in the numerous miracles described in 8:4-9:20. God demonstrated His power over nature in the calming of a storm (8:22-25), over the demonic world in the exorcism of a demon (8:26-39), over death and disease (8:40-56), over human physical needs in the feeding of the 5,000 (9:10-18). Foundation to these miracles stands

⁷The occupants of Galilee were basically Jewish in religious and patriotic orientation, but they were composed of various ethnic elements. The influence of this mixture was sufficient to cause recognizable differences in speech from that of southern Palestine (cf. Mt 26:69, 73). The Galileans absorbed more Greek and Roman influences than did the Judean Jews. The racial mixture, differences in speech, and location caused Judean Jews to view Galilee and its inhabitants with contempt (Jn 1:46; 7:41, 52).

Lower Galilee was densely settled with villages, and in NT times the population was probably about three million. The fertility of the soil and resultant fruitfulness of the country produced a prosperous Jewish populace, particularly in the centuries immediately after the time of Christ.

[source= Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Map on Lining Papers. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1988), 836.]

⁸I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Includes Indexes., *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Exeter [Eng.: Paternoster Press, 1978), 316.

his insightful teaching about the Kingdom through parables (8:4-18), as well as the hesitancy of his mother and brothers to accept his teaching (8:19-21). The Twelve are sent out on their own and return in joyous celebration of the powerful proclamation of the Kingdom (9:1-6), but all this demonstration of divine power that confirmed Jesus' preaching gave rise to suspicions and fear by Herod Antipas (9:7-9). Yet it was climaxed by Peter's great confession of faith in Christ as God's Savior (9:18-20).

What does all this have to do with us today? Let me suggest some possible connecting links. Most importantly, Jesus stands for the rule and reign of God in one's life. That rule is to begin with commitment to God through Christ, and will extend out into eternity. God is our boss! We take orders from Him, and from Him alone.

Secondly, our preaching the gospel message must center on that theme of the Kingdom of God. We are seeking to bring people to faith in Christ. Not just to get them saved. Far more importantly, to help them turn their lives completely over to God's control. Life abundant, and life eternal, revolves solely around God becoming Lord and Master of our life. There is no salvation without allowing God to rule over our life! This was the very heart beat of Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God.

Thirdly, the power of God can be observed tangibly in how God is permitted to transform us. Jesus' miracles were not done as an end within themselves. The reality is that Jesus healed only a tiny fraction of the people in his day who needed healing. Healing people for the sole purpose of making them well was not why Jesus did miracles. Luke makes this clear, and John in his Gospel writing makes it even clearer with his term for miracles, σημεῖον. Miracles were signs that pointed to something beyond themselves, that is, they pointed to the powerful rule of God expressed in Jesus' ministry. Select people experienced miracles in Jesus' ministry in order to bring them to commitment to God and His presence in Jesus. Thus authentic divine healing even in our day will always be a pointer to God's control over our lives. God is interested in our physical health, but He is infinitely more interested in our spiritual health. And that health can only be achieved when we allow God complete charge over our life.

This was the focal point of Jesus' trip through Galilee. His extensive traveling through towns and villages sought to maximize the impact of that message to the largest possible number of people. We have a good example here to follow.

b. He had people who helped him, vv. 1-b-3

Greek NT

8:1b ...καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ, 8:2 καὶ γυναικὲς τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνὴ, ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἑπτὰ ἐξεληλύθει, 8:3 καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου καὶ Σουσάννα καὶ ἕτεραι πολλαί, αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς.

NASB

1b The twelve were with Him, 2 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, 3 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.

NRSV

1b The twelve were with him, 2 as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

NLT

1b He took his twelve disciples with him, 2 along with some women he had healed and from whom he had cast out evil spirits. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons; 3 Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.

Notes:

Two other groups of people traveled with Jesus across Galilee participating in His preaching ministry. The Twelve disciples and certain women comprised those people. The exact number of men we know from Luke's labeling of the disciples, but the exact number of women is unclear. Luke names three and indicates that many others were in the group as well.

The ellipsis of the Greek verb διώδευον in the appropriate third person plural form of the imperfect tense simply highlights the close connection these two groups of people had to Jesus' travels. They were deeply involved in the activities that Luke stated about Jesus on this trip.

The Twelve: "[The twelve were with him](#)" (καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ). In Luke 6:13, Luke indicates that after a night of praying Jesus chose twelve disciples to be the inner circle of followers. Luke stresses that these twelve disciples were given the title apostles: "[When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles](#)" (καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο ἡμέρα, προσεφώνησεν τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ἀπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα, οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν). In this title they will occupy a unique place in Christianity. Their witness to Jesus served as the basis for the New Testament itself, since Jesus did not write down any of his teachings. The writings of the apostles comprise the documents of the New Testament. They assumed the dominant leadership role in the

Christian movement after Jesus' ascension back to the Heavenly Father. The apostle Paul comes into the picture on an equal status with this group after Judas' departure and because of his unique calling from God as an apostle (cf. Gal. 1:1-2). Thus when Luke subsequently refers to these twelve disciples he will commonly use the term [The Twelve](#) as here in 8:1 (οἱ δώδεκα), as a technical designation of them as apostles. This distinguished them from the other followers of Jesus who were also disciples.

On this occasion they were helping Jesus but also learning from him by observing him. Toward the end of this section of material Luke will indicate that they were sent out on a similar mission by themselves in order to accomplish the same objectives; compare 9:1-6

[1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." 6 So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.](#)

Both Matthew (10:5-13) and Mark (6:7-13) record this preaching tour of the Twelve. Thus a program of training by listening, observing, discussing, and

then commissioning to minister was set up by Jesus in order to help prepare them for the day of his arrest and crucifixion (cf. 9:21-27). They learned by observing and then by doing.

The women: “as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources” (καὶ γυναῖκες τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή, ἀφ’ ἧς δαιμόνια ἑπτὰ ἐξεληλύθει, καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου καὶ Σουσάννα καὶ ἕτεραι πολλαί, αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς). Clearly Luke’s focus here is more on the women than on the men in the traveling party.

The contribution of women to Jesus’ ministry in Luke’s gospel is well documented, as Darrell Bock notes:⁹

Women play a major role in Luke’s narrative. Talbert (1982: 90) compiled an impressive list of references to women in Luke’s Gospel (an asterisk indicates an account unique to Luke):¹

- * Elizabeth (1:5–7, 13, 24–25, 36, 40–45, 56–61)
- * Mary (1:26–56)
- * Anna (2:36–38)
- Peter’s mother-in-law (4:38–39)
- * widow of Nain (7:11–17)
- * sinful woman (7:36–50)
- * women who minister (8:1–3)
- hemorrhaging woman (8:43–48)
- * Martha and Mary (10:38–42)
- * crippled woman (13:10–17)
- * parable of the woman with lost coin (15:8–10)
- * parable of widow and judge (18:1–8)
- widow’s mite (21:1–4)
- women at the crucifixion (23:49, 55–56)
- women at the tomb (24:10–11)
- * report of women at the tomb (24:22–24)

Women were at the center of many of Jesus’ illustrations, and, as we see in the list above, Luke has many unique details on this theme. Women played a significant role in responding to and contributing to Jesus’ ministry. Material support from women, at least from the wealthy, is not uncharacteristic of religious leaders of the first century (Plummer 1896: 215; Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.2.4 §§41–44; Arndt 1956: 222). The Pharisees also gained support from women, but the way in which they secured help from widows was subject to criticism (Luke 20:47 = Mark 12:40). Apparently it often was used as leverage for power.² The common ancient view of women as seen but not heard is reflected more in John 4:27;

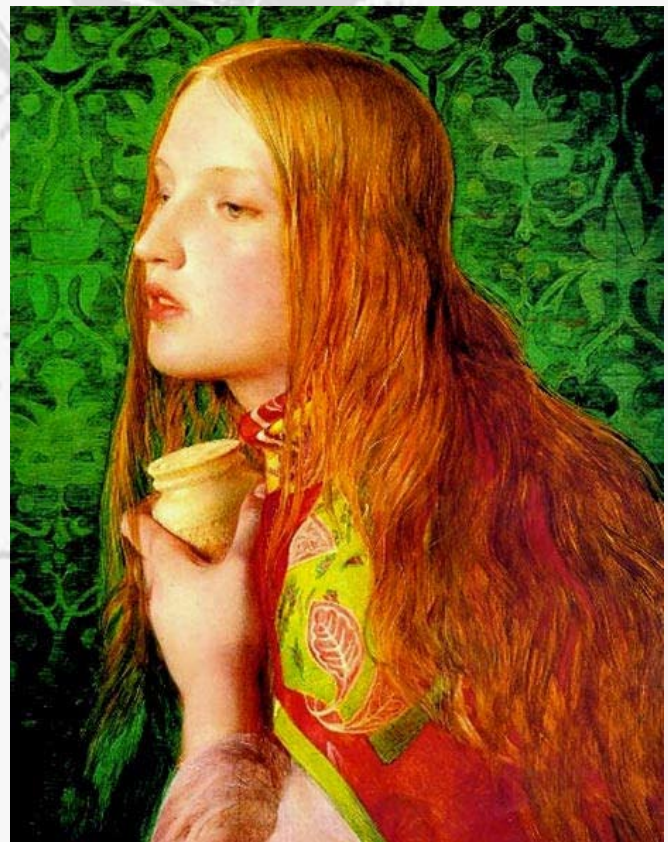
m. Abot 1.5; m. Soṭa 3.4; and t. Ber. 6.18 (= Neuser 1977–86: 1.40–41).³

Luke divides out his list of women into two groups: named women who had been healed, and many other unnamed women who were a major source of patronage in financial support of Jesus.

The named women. In the first group are Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. Luke indicates that these three women had been cured by Jesus of demon possession and illnesses (αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν).

Mary is singled out as having been healed of seven demons, signaling a severe affliction. Of her Bock (*Ibid*, 713) notes the following:

The first woman, Mary Magdalene, was freed from the presence of seven demons.¹¹ This healing is not presented in detail anywhere in the NT, but Mark 16:9 has a similar summary. After Jesus’ act of compassion, Mary decided to serve the agent of God who had healed her. The name Μαγδαληνή (Magdalene) suggests that she was from the region of Magdala, a town on the Sea of Galilee’s western shore about three miles north of Tiberias (Godet 1875: 1.365; Arndt 1956: 222; Μαγδαλά is a variant reading in Matt. 15:39). As was argued in the exegesis of 7:37, she was not the sinful woman who anointed Jesus. Nor is it clear that she was immoral, for demon possession was not a sinful condition.¹² Mary stayed faithful to Jesus, for it is recorded that she watched the crucifixion (Matt. 27:55–56 = Mark 15:40 = John



⁹Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 710.

19:25), saw where Jesus was laid (Matt. 27:61 = Mark 15:47 = Luke 23:55), and participated in the anointing of his body (Matt. 28:1 = Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; Danker 1988: 173).

Mary Magdalene has attracted lots of attention in recent years with some of the ridiculous assertions that she was married to Jesus and that she indeed was the notoriously sinful woman that a few Church Fathers had contended by wrongly assuming that her demon possession had led her into an immoral life style. On this basis she was then falsely associated with the “sinful woman” in 7:37 who anointed Jesus’ feet while he was dining at the home of a Pharisee. But no where in the exorcism narratives of the New Testament is demon possession linked to immoral living. Absolutely nothing in any of the gospel texts about this Mary suggests such an immoral past for her before coming to Jesus. The unnamed woman in 7:37 was an entirely different person from Mary. Perhaps she became a part of the unnamed group of women referenced here but we can’t be certain.

Much more importantly is Mary’s experience at the resurrection of Jesus. She is the one woman that [all four gospels writings](#) name as being the first people that Jesus appears to on Easter Sunday morning. The collective gospel account of that episode portrays Mary as a compassionate follower of Jesus who was deeply disturbed when the empty tomb was discovered. Luke’s naming her first in the list probably suggests the high esteem she enjoyed among first century Christians. From her healing on this lady gave herself in unselfish service to God through her faith in Christ.

The other two women, Joanna and Susanna, have a very low profile in the New Testament, but evidently were well known by early Christians. Again Bock (*Ibid.*, 713) notes:

The mention of Joanna (Ἰωάννα), who also is present with Mary Magdalene in 24:10, indicates the scope of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ message had reached into the world of the powerful, for Joanna was the wife of Chuza, who served as ἐπίτροπος (epitropos), an administrative official, in Herod’s court.¹³ Fitzmyer (1981: 698) suggests that he was manager of Herod’s estate. The name Χουζᾶς (Chuza) has Syrian and Nabatean roots (BAGD 884; BAA 1763). Some suggest that he might be the nobleman of John 4:46–53, but to establish this connection is difficult (Arndt 1956: 223; Geldenhuys 1951: 239–40 n. 5). Herod’s foster brother Manaen was another figure in the royal entourage who had contact with Christians (Acts 13:1; Leaney 1958: 150).

The third woman, Susanna (Σουσάννα), is mentioned only here in the NT. Nothing else is known about her.

Both of these women had been healed by Jesus and consequently became His disciples and joined the group traveling with Jesus. As Bock notes, Joanna came from a position of wealth and prominence in governmental circles in Galilee during that time. Clearly she was married, while we don’t know the marital status of the other women. For her as a married woman, especially of prominence, to travel around the countryside with this Jewish teacher was indeed uncommon, and potentially scandalous in some Jewish circles.

The unnamed women. The second group of women mentioned by Luke is a larger number of women whom Luke doesn’t name. Very likely they had experienced similar blessing from Jesus as the three named ladies, and consequently became a part of the group of disciples who traveled with Jesus.

The point stressed by Luke regarding the women was that they “[provided for them out of their resources](#)” (ἕτεραι πολλάί, αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς). The wording of the Greek text varies among ancient copies from reading that the women were ministering to Jesus (“[to him](#)” αὐτῷ) to reading that they were ministering to Jesus and the Twelve (“[to them](#)” αὐτοῖς). The plural form has greater support and thus is considered the most likely original reading of the text.¹⁰

Luke stresses the patronage of these ladies of the traveling group with the use of the verb διηκόνουν, as Bock (*Ibid.*, 714) correctly notes:

[Luke leaves unnamed the other women who minister to Jesus and his disciples through their material resources. The verb διακονέω \(diakoneō\) can mean “to wait tables” \(Luke 10:40; 12:37; 17:8; 22:26–27 \[three times\]; John 12:2; Acts 6:2; BAGD 184 §1, §3; BAA 368 §1, §3; Beyer, TDNT 2:85\) or “to serve” \(Luke 4:39; Mark 1:13, 31; Rom. 15:25; BAGD 184 §2, §4; BAA 368 §2, §4\). The more general meaning is supported by the reference to resources in this passage.¹⁴ The women supported the entire group as a reflection of their faith and thereby picture an \[exemplary response to Jesus\]\(#\).¹⁵ The early church](#)

¹⁰The plural is supported by good representatives of the Alexandrian and the Western text-types; the singular (compare Mt 27:55; Mk 15:41) appears to be a Christocentric correction, due perhaps to Marcion. [source= Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 120.]

will also be generous in providing for members' needs (Acts 4:32).

The use of the imperfect tense verb form, *διδόνου*, stresses the continuing support that these women were giving. It was not a one time gift, nor an occasional gift. Instead, they provided ongoing support that extended the duration of his public ministry.

One grammatical uncertainty with the relative clause mentioning their patronage has to do with whether it modifies just the unnamed group of women, or whether it implies both groups of women. The naming of Joanna who possessed substantial wealth through her husband Chuza favors the clause modifying both groups of women. Also the use of the relative pronoun *αἵτινες*, instead of *αἱ*, which was used of the first group, favors this understanding. But the evidence isn't decisive, and the rhetorical balance achieved by parallel relative clauses in reference to the two groups favors limiting the patronage to the second group of unnamed women.

How do these verses relate to us today? Several thoughts come to mind. **First, discipleship is a learning experience.** The Twelve and the women came to understand Jesus and how to best serve Him by spending time with Him. They didn't just experience an encounter with him and then return home to try to figure out how to serve. Rather, that joint a group of followers who sought to be with Jesus every possible minute. Through observing him and listening to his teaching they came to understand how they were to live and serve God. To be certain, we can't physically be with Jesus today, but through the leadership of the Holy Spirit we can be with the risen Lord, and by Bible study we can spend time with Him, learning from and observing Him. Christian commitment is always a 'student' experience where we constantly are to grow and understand better the will of God in our lives.

Second, the Twelve and the women served in actual ministry. The over arching text structure clearly indicates that both the apostles and the women actively participated in the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus. They had things to do in order to help Jesus reach more people. We could wish that Luke had given more details about this, but his objective was to set these followers up as examples for us to imitate in our Christian commitment. Thus, the things we need to do today in service to Christ can easily take a different form than what the apostles and women did on this preaching tour of Galilee. But the principle remains the same. Learning leads to ministry. That was true then, and

remains true for us today.

Third, the Twelve continue to occupy a unique place for us as modern Christians. The biblically grounded church of Jesus Christ has only these Twelve and Paul as apostles. This position in Christianity was limited to these individuals in the first century and excludes all others. In Luke 6:13 this is clearly signaled¹¹ and the subsequent labeling of these disciples by the distinctive term "[the Twelve](#)" confirms this. These men, however, continue to play a defining role in contemporary Christianity through the treasure of their writings we call the New Testament.

Fourth, ministry grows out of gratitude for God's blessing in Christ. Both the Twelve and especially the women served Jesus not because they were forced to, but because they deeply loved Him and sought to express that love through service. This is foundational to Christian experience. Christianity is a religion motivated by love, not by fear. The fact that we will all be held accountable for our actions in final judgment is real, but it is not the basic reason we serve Christ. We passionately love Him, and thus we serve Him. That was true of these men and women, and remains true for us today.

Fifth, ministry and service must include women. If anything is clear from our text, it is that Jesus made a place of service available to all women who came to Him in faith commitment. His provision went against the social customs of his day, and sought to affirm equality and respect for women. As the subsequent history of apostolic Christianity affirms in Acts and the letters of the New Testament, women were accorded every place of ministry from leadership roles to lowly positions of ministry. They were teachers, preachers and servants in the house churches. They contributed in countless different ways to the spread of the Gospel.

Sixth, ministry includes financial contribution. The patronage of the women of Jesus' ministry stands as a shining example of Christian commitment. What the women gave was not limited to a single gift, nor even to an occasional contribution. Instead it was an ongoing support of the work of Jesus and his followers. They have set a challenging example for us to follow.

Indeed we can learn much from these three short verses of scripture. God help us to learn and apply what we have learned!

¹¹"chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles" (καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ἀπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα, οὓς καὶ ἀποστόλους ὠνόμασεν)

Greek NT

8:1 Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς καὶ αὐτὸς διώδευεν κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην κηρύσσων καὶ εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ, 8:2 καὶ γυναῖκες τινες αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν, Μαρία ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή, ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἐπταῦ ἐξεληλύθει, 8:3 καὶ Ἰωάννα γυνὴ Χουζᾶ ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου καὶ Σουσάννα καὶ ἕτεραι πολλαί, αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς.

NASB

1 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, 2 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, 3 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.

NRSV

1 Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, 2 as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

NLT

1 Not long afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby cities and villages to announce the Good News concerning the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him, 2 along with some women he had healed and from whom he had cast out evil spirits. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons; 3 Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.

Greek NT Diagram

- 8.1 Καὶ
- 1 ἐγένετο
- ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς
- καὶ
- 2 αὐτὸς διώδευεν
- κατὰ πόλιν καὶ κώμην
- κηρύσσων
- καὶ
- εὐαγγελιζόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ
- καὶ
- 3 οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ (ἦσαν)
- 8.2 καὶ
- 4 γυναῖκες τινες (σὺν αὐτῷ ἦσαν)
- αἱ ἦσαν τεθεραπευμέναι
- ἀπὸ πνευμάτων πονηρῶν καὶ ἀσθενειῶν,
- Μαρία
- ἡ καλουμένη Μαγδαληνή,
- ἀφ' ἧς δαιμόνια ἐπτά ἐξεληλύθει,
- 8.3 καὶ
- Ἰωάννα
- γυνὴ Χουζᾶ
- ἐπιτρόπου Ἡρώδου
- καὶ
- Σουσάννα
- καὶ
- ἕτεραι πολλαί,
- αἵτινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς
- ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς.

Summary of Rhetorical Structure:

In this single sentence are three or four core affirmations. But the syntax of the sentence can be understood otherwise with statement 1 as the foundational declaration and statements 2 - 4 as dependent clauses in a anacoluthon structure. Probably it is best to take the sentence as diagramed above.

The sentence functions as a Lukan summary statement and is used to introduce the section of 8:1-9:50, as Nolland asserts:¹

The pericope consists of one long involved sentence with syntactical ambiguities. In particular, it is unclear whether the final relative clause (v 3b) refers to all the women (vv 2–3a), or whether it forms a structural parallel to the relative clause of v 2a and refers only to the “many others.” It is also possible, but not likely, that the “many others” of v 3 are to be included in the “certain women” of v 2 and are then to be included in the relative clause of v 2a. The pericope is a Lukan summary statement designed to serve as an interpretive framework for the section it introduces (8:1–9:20). As a pericope it is a literary product which brings together traditional elements but evidences no earlier life as an oral unit.

Luke seems to have brought together various traditional elements to form this pericope. There is influence from Luke 4:43–44 (behind that is Mark 1:38–39), Mark 3:14, and possibly Mark 15:40–41. The last is uncertain only because Luke has a tradition other than Mark 15:40–41 from which he draws the list of women who accom-

¹John Nolland, vol. 35A, *Word Biblical Commentary: Luke 1:1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 364.

pany Jesus (cf. Hengel, "Maria Magdalena," 247; note esp. the traditional-sounding clause on Mary Magdalene) and the extent of overlap of this tradition with Mark 15:40–41 is uncertain. Schürmann's claim (447–48) that Q material reflected in Matt 11:1 and 9:35 is also an influence is made less likely by the Matthean redaction evident in those verses.

In either way of approaching the syntax, the emerging structure is clear. The first two statements focus on Jesus, and statements 3 - 4 focus on those who accompanied him in his preaching tour of Galilee. The major emphasis falls on the women who went along.

