

CHAPTER 4

Today's passages to ponder focus on three New Testament women, each of whom played a significant role in the *Early Church*: Lydia (Acts 16:13–15) and Lois and Eunice (2 Tim 1:3–5). In the first passage, Luke writes:

On the sabbath we went outside the city gate along the river where we thought there would be a place of prayer. We sat and spoke with the women who had gathered there. One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God, listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. After she and her household had been baptized, she offered us an invitation, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home," and she prevailed on us.

In the second passage, Paul writes to his beloved spiritual son Timothy about the spiritual legacy Timothy received from his grandmother and mother.

I am grateful to God, whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. I yearn to see you again, recalling your tears, so that I may be filled with joy, as I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and that I am confident lives also in you.

1. Though scripture does not tell us a great deal about these women, what do you think were some of their charisms? We do not always need to know a lot about someone to discern a charism, because charisms stand out. What are some charisms that stand out among women in your ministry, especially among the women you do not know very well?
2. Complete the Spiritual Gifts and Service Conversation Starter. Share your answers with a friend or in your ministry group. Did anything surprise you? Based on this, how are you—or how are you not—using your spiritual gifts in the way that God is calling you? (You may need to continue this conversation with a spiritual director.)

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3. Share about a time when you felt certain that you were serving with your unique spiritual gifts. Did anyone encourage you in sharing those spiritual gifts? How?

4. Consider the position descriptions, which you downloaded from the website. Are there necessary tasks that your ministry's leadership team needs to include in your job descriptions? Based on the interests and needs of your community, should other ministry roles be created? If so, invite women in the community to consider taking on these new roles.

5. Think of someone you know who is currently using their spiritual gifts to build the Church. Acknowledge that person this week. Name what you have observed as their gifts in conversation, by sending a note, an encouraging text, or an email. You will be sharing the gift of exhortation, which is always needed in women's ministry!

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND CONVERSATION STARTER

Look for natural opportunities to talk about spiritual gifts. We have to help women discover their spiritual gifts and use them in ways that complement each other. We can come to know our spiritual gifts through prayer, observation, and conversation.

One method to help women explore their spiritual gifts and how to share them is to facilitate a conversation using the Spiritual Gifts and Service Conversation Starter below.

Spiritual Gifts and Service Conversation Starter	
What do you enjoy doing?	What do you want to learn?
What excites you?	What are you tired of doing?

CHAPTER 5

Today's passage to ponder is from the *Gospel of John* (4:27- 42), which captures the moments as the disciples return to find the Samaritan woman with Jesus. Read the passage slowly and prayerfully before answering the questions below.

At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, "What are you looking for?" or "Why are you talking with her?" The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?" They went out of the town and came to him.

Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat." But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." So the disciples said to one another, "Could someone have brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'In four months the harvest will be here'? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest. The reaper is already receiving his payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together. For here the saying is verified that 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work."

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me everything I have done." When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world."

1. Read the passage again as an exercise in *lectio divina*, or "spiritual reading." This involves reading the passage several times—you might want to do this exercise in adoration or before the tabernacle, where Jesus is present. The first time, simply read the passage and pay attention to any details or words that jump out at you. What might God be saying to you through his Word? Read the passage again, and this time write down your thoughts about this passage. Finally, read the passage slowly and then spend time in silent contemplation, just letting God speak to you. Allow at least twenty to thirty minutes to complete this exercise. After completing the exercise, share your experience and insights with your ministry group or a friend in ministry.

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2. How has someone reached out to help you come to know Jesus? What did that person do? How did the invitation make you feel?

3. Who are the “women at the well” in your community? They may not be outcast, but they are definitely underserved. What are three concrete steps your community could take to reach out to them?

4. What are the “we shoulds” in your community or in your heart? What should you do about them? Have you ever felt or verbalized a “we should” in your community? How did you respond to it?