

QUESTION: Who are the “prominent women” mentioned in Acts 17:12, and what role did they play in the spread of the gospel?

ANSWER:

As the apostles obeyed the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ—to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19, ESV)—they encountered people from diverse backgrounds, social classes, and cultures. Among those who believed the message of the gospel were women of high status, also referred to as “prominent women” in Acts 17:12.

This passage refers specifically to Paul and Silas’s ministry in Berea, where their message was received with eagerness and sincerity.

Acts 17:10-12 (ESV)

[10] The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

[11] Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

[12] Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

Who Were These Prominent Women?

The Greek phrase used here, *gunaikes euschēmones*, translates to “women of high standing” or “of honorable estate.” These were likely women of influence—socially, politically, or economically. In the Greco-Roman world, women of wealth and prestige often supported public causes, religious temples, and philosophical teachers. When they encountered the message of Christ, their hearts were opened to the truth.

Theological Insight:

God does not show partiality (Romans 2:11), and the gospel is intended for all people regardless of class, gender, or ethnicity. The early church was revolutionary in its inclusion of women in

spiritual matters, which contrasted with the prevailing culture that often marginalized them. That women of status would believe and be recorded in Scripture emphasizes how the kingdom of God breaks down social barriers.

Galatians 3:28 (ESV)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Prominent Women as Gospel Partners

These women were not only believers—they were likely benefactors of the early Christian movement. In the New Testament, we see several examples of women supporting the ministry of Jesus and the apostles with their resources:

Lydia, a wealthy merchant and the first convert in Europe (Acts 16:14–15), opened her home for ministry.

Phoebe, a deacon in the church at Cenchreae, was commended by Paul as a servant and supporter (Romans 16:1-2).

Joanna, Susanna, and others supported Jesus financially during His earthly ministry (Luke 8:1-3).

These examples show that women of means were essential to the growth and sustenance of the early church, not just in faith but in tangible, sacrificial service.

Opposition from the Influential

Interestingly, people of influence could be used both for and against the gospel. While some high-standing women became believers, others—manipulated by opposition—were stirred up against the apostles.

Acts 13:50 (ESV)

But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Just as in Berea some prominent women became believers, in Pisidian Antioch, others were used to oppose the gospel. This illustrates the spiritual reality Paul later described:

2 Corinthians 2:15–16 (ESV)

For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life...

Practical Application:

Today, this account reminds us that no one is beyond the reach of the gospel—whether rich or poor, educated or uneducated, powerful or marginalized. We must preach the gospel without discrimination, trusting the Holy Spirit to work in every heart.

We also learn that those with influence can play a significant role

in either advancing or resisting the purposes of God. That's why it's important to pray for leaders, to evangelize boldly, and to disciple people across all levels of society.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 (ESV)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions...

Conclusion:

The “prominent women” of Acts 17:12 serve as a testament to the power of the gospel to transform every type of person. Their faith and influence became a vehicle for God's kingdom to grow in unexpected places. May we be faithful to share the gospel with all, living the results to the Lord.

May the Lord bless you.

And may you boldly share this good news with others!

Who Were the Prominent Women? (Acts 17:12)

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