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INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to Episode 11 of Acts Alive!

Were we’ve looked at how ordinary people, empowered by the Holy Spirit can do extraordinary things,

triumph in the face of Crises and difficulty,

and live lives that count beyond simply surviving our current troubles and hoping for better days!

Think about this… when was the last time you had a great Triumph? … or a great Sorrow?

Did you have someone to call and share that news with?

* I don’t mean post on online for your Facebook friends, or social followers to comment on.
* Did you have someONE to call?
* Someone who knows you, who’s aware of your journey, who’s up to date with you’re at in life.
* Someone who would roll up their sleeves and do whatever they can to help you
* Someone who will genuinely share your joy of success
* Someone who will pray and carry the burden as if it was their own.

As we’ve journeyed thru the book of Acts in our Series Acts Alive!

We’ve seen how this rampant, explosive gospel spread from very humble beginnings from predominantly Jewish communities,

to reaching into every culture and class of society, every language group, and every corner of the known world.

The Acts story covers 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 Mediterranean islands!

But the Increasing Spread of the Gospel resulted in Increasing difficulty & opposition.

But we’ve also seen it came with a price,

at first the Roman Empire ignored Christianity thinking it was simply some obscure Jewish development that posed no impact outside of that community.

But as 100’s, then 1000’s and ultimately 100s of 1000’s of people from every strata, gave allegiance to a new King Rome itself was threatened!

One of the keys to this gospel expansion was that of deep relationships and camaraderie, which united people from vastly different backgrounds and personalities into loving supportive partnerships, taking the world for Jesus!

This morning in honour of Women’s Day we’re going to look at some of the Ladies that impact the Acts Story!

Remember the culture of the day was Paternalistic and Autocratic.

But as the Gospel develops we see a Stark difference of Kingdom of God culture and the freedom and opportunities it brings!

In Christ there are no Second Class citizens, even if there may be in the prevailing culture.

The Gospel transforms the roles & significance of every member, bringing meaning and the privilege of serving Jesus with the Gifts He has given us all.

Historian Rodney Stark a non Christian historian says this of the History of the early church.

Women were especially drawn to Christianity because if offered them a life that was so greatly superior to the life they otherwise would have led.

Jesus welcomed women into his inner circle.

He encouraged them to learn,

he spoke to them directly and

he insisted that they be treated kindly and with respect.

Women played key roles in the planting of churches and

the expansion of the Kingdom of God throughout the Roman world.

Women held many offices in the church,

they hosted churches in their homes,

they funded churches out of their private resources,

they ministered to women, widows, the sick and the young;

We see examples of Women who taught, were prophets, & even apostles

They enjoyed the respect of the Apostles and they were involved in the mentoring of new believers.

**5 Mins**

1. **Romans:**
2. Pauls heart is very clear to see in his actions
   1. He wants the world to know about Jesus
   2. He’s convinced that the best way for this to happen is to
      1. Evangelise: Preach the gospel in a new area
      2. Salvations – gather those who are saved
      3. Teach – establish them in their new faith in Jesus
      4. Organise – these people into Established Church Communities
      5. Go – move on to do the same again, leaving them to impact their own area
      6. Return – to encourage, support, keep them connected to the bigger picture!
3. Beginning in Jerusalem, we see how in more than four major journeys Paul is led by the Holy Spirit Westwards, to bring the Gospel to Rome, the seat of the Empire’s power, and beyond that to Spain and beyond!
4. During his 3rd Journey as he gets to Corinth in Greece, he writes a letter to a church he has never visited in Rome!
   1. Rom16: 1-2 Paul hoped to come soon to the believers at Rome (15:32), but he must first go to Jerusalem (15:25). But another believer, Phoebe, was about to leave for the imperial city, so Paul took this opportunity to commend her to the church.
5. We know of at least 5 churches in Rome, meeting in homes. Paul has relationships with many there, so he writes this letter and commits it to Phoebe, a Deacon from Corinth.

**Romans 16:**

1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon, of the church in Cenchreae. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

5 Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

6 Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

8 Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

10 Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

11 Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.

15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord’s people who are with them.

16 Greet one another with a holy kiss.

All the churches of Christ send greetings.

Women are major players in the Spread of the Gospel in Acts!

Women like

* Mary & Lydia offer Hospitality to the Apostles and open their homes as venues for the early church
* Tabitha are know and loved for their selfless service and care for the believers
* Philips 4 daughters know as prophets who dedicate their lives to prayer ministry!
* Priscilla who uses her business as a strategic platform for the gospel spread to other countries, and is able to teach deep truths of the faith.
* Junia who is know as part of the Apostles team
* Phoebe a deacon strong in personality and faith that she is entrusted with carrying the letter to the Roman churches (some say the most import book of the NT in terms of theology) from Greece to Italy!

**10 Mins**

1. **Women**
2. **Tabitha / Dorcas Acts 9:36**

9:36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. 37 About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. 38 Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, “Please come at once!”

39 Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.

* 1. Not a Prophet, nor Preacher as some women were!
  2. Called a “disciple”
  3. “Full of Good works” & Charitable deeds
  4. Made clothes for the believers!
  5. May have been a widow.
  6. Respected & valued much because when she gets sick, believers gather and call for Peter!
  7. Raised from dead

**Tabitha Teaches us: To Live Servant Heartedly**

* **Love in action**
* **To Live Healed**! Widow, ministers to widows! Ministers to those like her – not held back by her own experience
* **Bloom Where you’re Planted**! Deeply loved, not just for her good works
* **To Embrace our 2nd / 3rd Act**!

1. **Mary – John Marks Mother Acts 12:12**

Acts 12: 12 When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.

During the first few centuries of church history, there were no dedicated church buildings.

Local groups met in the homes of believers whose houses were large enough to accommodate such gatherings.

One of these early house churches was hosted by a woman named Mary, the mother of John Mark.

Mary was most likely a wealthy widow, originally from Cyprus and related to Barnabas,

Peter was a close friend of this congregation, and Mary’s son eventually became his assistant, and an Apostle writing the Gospel of Mark from the great apostle’s memoirs.

1. Well off and influential
2. Upper class – slave Rhoda
3. Church met in her home
4. Peter arrested – church prays at her house!
5. James had been recently executed and Peter imprisoned, Herod, ruler of Jerusalem embarks on a terrible persecution of Christians
6. Mary continues to open her home!

**Mary Teaches us To Live Courageously**

* **Godly Stewardship and Kingdom heartedness**
* **Sacrificial life** – church in her home!!
  + Think of having groups of people in your house multiple times a week!
  + When we ask for help with hosting, many people feel they can't help! Mary opened her home to the church!
  + Lorry & Rose = founder members of the church we led in Margate. [HOWARD & DEBBIE] When they sold their farm and moved into town they made sure to build a house with an Upper Room! Size of a triple garage, kitchenet, bathroom, for church meetings! The church was meeting in a Rotary hall, later a school hall and had nowhere to meet midweek!
  + Met there for 15 years!
* **Courage** to make tough calls in the face of danger. Mary doesn’t hesitate to continue to offer her home for the church to meet in.

1. **Lydia Acts 16:13**

11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. 12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. 14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. 15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Wealthy and influential Business lady – dealer in purple cloth.

Lydia was a Gentile who, like Cornelius (see 10:2), believed in the true God and followed the moral teachings of Scripture. Not a Jew, she is still seeking God, and ready to meet Jesus!

A Gentile Widow from Thyatira she moves to Philippi to expand her business, would have been influential with politicians and Military leaders as her clients.

Provides the Gospel with a Beach Head into Europe!



1. First Salvation in Europe (Greece)
2. First church Plant in Europe – & only women!!
3. First base in Europe
   1. Invites the Apostles to stay at her home
   2. Church meets in her home!

**Lydia Teaches us To Live Sacrificially**

* **A Hunger for God** – she was seeking God, regular in prayer!
* **Small beginnings can be Significant!** – a few ladies, seeking God and praying become the access point for the Gospel into Europe!
* **Selfless sacrifice** – all she had, her friendship circle, standing in the community, resources, home and money was willing offered to serve Jesus!

1. **Priscilla Acts 18:2**

Acts 18: 2 There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, 3 and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchreae because of a vow he had taken. 19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

1. P & Aquilla her husband were Christian, expelled from Rome in 49-54 by Claudius
   1. A Cross cultural couple – Aquilla was Jewish, Priscilla Roman.
   2. Always mentioned together indicating equal partners, & most often Priscilla is mentioned first, emphasising that she was more prominent / gifted than her husband.
   3. Move to Corinth in Greece and meet Paul
   4. Business people – Leather workers & tent makers.
   5. Help Paul plant the church in Ephesus by establishing a business in the new region.
   6. Rome – Corinth 1200km, Corinth – Ephesus 800km across the Aegean Sea!
   7. Did business in 3 countries for the Gospel! NB Italy – Greece – Turkey!!
   8. They were so stirred by the Gospel to all nations that they saw their business as a strategic opportunity for the Gospel.
   9. Paul leaves the Ephesus Church in their care after 3 months!
   10. Build Ephesus into a Base where Apollos and others operate from. 7 churches of Revelation planted from Ephesus.
   11. Deeply grounded in truth – able to instruct Apollos!

**Priscilla Teaches us To Live Strategically**

* **Pursue own gifting**, but still in team with husband. No wrestle for power, just getting on with the Job!!
* **Strategic approach to the Gospel!** Business as Kingdom advance: not leave me to my world and I’ll bring back my tithe only.
* What in your life could be a **platform** for the gospel? Kids going to a new school? Moving to new suburb? Starting new Job? Walking with ladies in your neighbourhood? Getting involved in a need or good cause?
* **Can do Posibilitarian!**
* – not shy with own gifting, strong, even schools Apollos, but also not pushy, not difficult to lead.

1. **Lois & Eunice 2 Tim 1:5**

5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

Appeal for Loyalty to Paul and the Gospel

6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

1. Mentioned only here, we see the power of generations following God.
   1. Grand mother had put into her daughter, mother into her son, Son becomes a major player in the Gospel.

**Lois & Unice teach us To Live Generationally**

* The power of **Praying family**
* **Great significance** is achieved in kitchens, and lounges, while doing family chores, humbly serving others.
* That the **Humble can Impact the Nations.** not just those with Upfront gifts
* **That even quiet lives can count for eternity!**

CONCLUSION:

Hows your service?

Is the day to dailiness of life distracting you from the Kingdom of God?

* So easy!

How’s your 2nd Act or 3rd?

Or maybe your Yet to Start your 1st!!

We see in these ladies, no Excuse!

That everyone of us Gets to Count for Jesus … if we will Live for Him, not just for ourselves.

If we will live for Eternity , not just for this life!

Each of these Women, who in the context of the day would have been unlikely candidates, every one of them,

but Born Again into the Kingdom of God,

Empowered by the Holy Spirit,

Each one designed differently by God,

Play their part in Changing the World …

**How About You?**