



Sunday School Lesson for November 13, 2005.
Released on November 10, 2005.

"Lydia-A Committed Woman-Demonstrates Faithfulness"

LESSON TEXT: **Acts 16:6-15**

READ: **Acts 16:1-40**

TIME: A.D. 50-51

PLACES: Troas and Philippi

GOLDEN TEXT: "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.' So she persuaded us" (Acts 16:15b NIV).

INTRODUCTION

This quarter's lessons center around Jesus Christ's command that "You Will Be My Witnesses." The "you" refers to all Christian believers, and the "witness[ing]" was to be done "in Jerusalem," "in all Judea and Samaria," and "to the ends of the earth" (see Acts 1:8). And although today's lesson references a single "committed" woman, Lydia; a more befitting title might be "The Moving of the Holy Spirit," or "Being Led by the Spirit of God," or "God Opens the Doors," or "Being Obedient to God's Guidance," since we can easily see His divine influence woven throughout these brief scriptures.

As we study this lesson, may we be reminded that even at our most intellectual best we are not equipped to convert the hearts of mankind. We are instructed in God's word to plant the seed of salvation and then move on to allow God-in His own divine time-to cause the germination of our planting. To be sure, though, we are called upon to be Christian sowers.*

BACKGROUND

Saul trusted in Christ around A.D. 32. At first the Jerusalem saints did not believe Saul's conversion was genuine (Acts 9:26-30). After Barnabas vouched for him, Saul stayed in Jerusalem a while. When the Jews plotted to kill Saul, he went back to his hometown of Tarsus.

As the church began growing in Antioch, Barnabas journeyed to Tarsus to find Saul, since he would be useful in that work (11:25-26). Along with others, Saul busied himself with teaching the Word of God in Antioch (13:1-3). While engaged in this ministry, the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to mission work. Barnabas and

Saul thus departed on their first missionary journey, lasting from about A.D. 47 to 48. From Acts 13:9 on, Saul is known as Paul.

In about A.D. 49, Paul and Barnabas decided to return to some previously evangelized cities. A dispute between them, however, led to a parting of the ways. Luke-the author of Acts-traced the movement of the new team, that of Paul and Silas-a prophet from Jerusalem (15:22, 32).

*A note to our fellow disciples of Christ about Paul's missionary journeys. We know that it can be disheartening to try to pronounce the Biblical names and places in today's lesson, but give it a go any way. (Refer to the HOW TO SAY IT section for help.) And Paul's many travels to here and to there and back again can make your eyes cross, but try to follow them any how. The times and duration of his journeys are also just as daunting, but do not fail to read each verse in its entirety and draw yourself a timeline if necessary to keep track. (There are innumerable Bible resources available with this information already contained therein. One good source is the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*.)

You may need a reminder that with regular and continued study, you have the ability to memorize scripture, pronounce long names, and recognize scriptural "addresses" on command. John 14:26 says "...the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." First Corinthians 2:13 says that the Holy Spirit interprets spiritual truths to spiritual men and women (paraphrased). So, do not give up. Being a better Biblical student begins right here and right now. Grace and peace!

LESSON AIMS

Facts-to follow Paul's missionary footsteps on a journey that led to Philippi and Lydia.

Principle-to remind Christians that God is at work opening hearts to receive His Word.

Application-to encourage Christians to follow the Lord's leading by taking advantage of the opportunities He provides to present the gospel.

LESSON OUTLINE

Closed Doors, Acts 16:6-8

Clear Vision, Acts 16:9-12

Compliant Heart, Acts 16:13-15

HOW TO SAY IT

Aegean. A-*jee*-un.

Amphipolis. Am-*fip*-o-liss.

Antioch. An-tee-ock.

Apollonia. Ap-uh-*low*-nee-uh.

Athens. *Ath*-unz.

Berea. Buh-*ree*-uh.

Bithynia. Bih-*thin*-ee-uh.

Cornelius. Cor-*neel*-yus.

Cyprus. *Sigh*-prus.

Ethiopian. E-*thee*-o-pee-un (*th* as in *thin*).

Galatia. Guh-*lay*-shuh.

Lydia. *Lid*-ee-uh.

Macedonia. Mass-eh-*doe*-nee-uh.

Mysia. *Mish*-ee-uh.

Neapolis. Nee-*ap*-o-lis.

Pamphylia. Pam-*fill*-ee-uh.

Phrygia. *Frij*-e-uh.

Pisidia. Pih-*sid*-ee-uh.

Samothracia. Sam-o-*thray*-shuh.

Synagogue. *Sin*-uh-gog.

Syrian. *Sear*-ee-un.

Thessalonica. *Thess*-uh-lo-*nye*-kuh (strong accent on *nye*; *th* as in *thin*).

Thyatira. *Thy*-uh-*tie*-ruh (strong accent on *tie*; *th* as in *thin*).

LESSON TEXT

Paul's Vision of the Man of Macedonia

6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Lydia's Conversion in Philippi

11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day 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 named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who 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.

QUESTIONS

Q.1 What did Paul suggest to Barnabas after the Jerusalem council? (Acts 16:6)

After the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15:1-29), Paul suggested to Barnabas that they return to areas where they had established churches on the first missionary journey.

Q.2 What led to Paul and Silas going on a missionary journey instead of Paul and Barnabas? (Acts 15:38-41)

Being the "son of consolation" (Acts 4:36), or encouragement, Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along again (15:37). Paul, however, felt that because Mark had left them on the first journey (13:13 and 15:38), he should not be invited to go along on this second journey. Apparently Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance, but Paul did not. Since Mark and Barnabas were related (see Col. 4:10), there may have been family pressures for Barnabas to take him along too.

Neither Paul nor Barnabas was willing to alter his position in this matter. Two missionary teams were thus formed: Barnabas and Mark, and Paul and Silas. Paul and Barnabas did not allow their disagreement to stop their missionary journeys, even though they continued with different partners and in different directions. Barnabas headed for Cyprus—the location of the first stop on the first missionary journey and also his hometown area. Paul and Silas headed for southern Galatia where the cities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe were located.

Q.3 Why did the Holy Spirit prevent Paul and Silas from evangelizing certain areas? (Acts 16:6-8)

Although Luke did not tell us how Paul and Silas knew God did not want them to preach in the regions of Asia Minor (which occupies the western part of modern day Turkey), the fact that Paul was an apostle and Silas a prophet may lead us to conclude that some divine revelation was given to them concerning this decision.

As Christians, we must constantly seek the Lord's guidance concerning both witnessing opportunities and daily decisions. When God says no, it may simply mean that He has something better in mind for us. Keep moving.

Even though Paul and Silas were led not to preach in certain areas, this guidance was designed to keep them moving westward to Troas. There they would receive a clear vision of where they were to share the gospel next.

Q.4 Where was Troas? What vision did Paul have there? (Acts 16:9-1)

Located in the northeastern shore of the Aegean Sea, Troas was named after the ancient city of Troy, which was located nearby. It was a Roman colony and an important port city during this period. When returning from his third missionary journey, Paul stopped at Troas for seven days (Acts 20:5-12).

In his vision, Paul saw a "man of Macedonia" (v.9). How he knew that this particular man was from Macedonia is not stated, although the man begged Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (v.9).

Q.5 Who made the journey from Troas to Macedonia? (Acts 16:10)

Even though Paul alone saw the vision, the entire missionary party decided to go to Macedonia. This they endeavored to do "immediately" (v.10).

The presence of the word "we" in verse 10 is significant because it indicates that the author of Acts, Luke, had now joined the missionary band. Luke would journey with them to Philippi, where he would remain after the others journeyed on to other

places. Note that once God's will is known, it should be obeyed as quickly as possible.

Q.6 Why was Philippi important? (Acts 16:12)

Philippi was important because it was "the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony." Named after the father of Alexander the Great, Philip II of Macedon, the city of Philippi was significant for several reasons. It was a prosperous city-with gold and silver mines located nearby. It was also a Roman colony whose benefits included its people living in a self-governed and taxless city among retired Roman soldiers. Roman pride ran high in the city.

Q.7 Why did Paul go to the riverside on the Sabbath? (Acts 16:13)

Paul's usual custom was to present the gospel first in the Jewish synagogue and then turn to Gentiles if or when opposition arose. In this case, there was no synagogue in Philippi. This means there were so few Jews in town that there were not the required ten men or ten families headed by men to form a synagogue.

Paul nevertheless discovered that some women did come together on the Sabbath Day near the river. This site was likely selected to accommodate various Jewish ceremonial washings. It seems that the Sabbath prayer meeting was attended only by some women.

Q.8 Where was Lydia from? What was her business? (Acts 16:14)

We are introduced to the first convent we know of in Europe... a woman named Lydia who was from Thyatira-a city of the province of Asia. At some point a church was planted in Thyatira, for it is one of the seven churches addressed in Revelation.

Lydia was a "seller of purple." Purple was the color that royalty wore. It was a very valuable color because it was obtained from shellfish drop by drop and then used to dye fabric. Whether Lydia sold the dye itself or sold the fabric already dyed, is not certain. Concerning the fabric, there was great demand for it among the rich, for it was used for the official toga at Rome and in the colonies. We still hear the term "royal purple" being used today.

Lastly, we are told that Lydia was a woman who "worshipped God." This means that she had adopted certain Jewish practices without fully converting to Judaism.

Q.9 Why did Lydia respond to the gospel message? What did she do after trusting in Christ? (Acts 16:14b-15)

As a seeker of truth, Lydia "heed[ed] the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14b). Paul preached the gospel, but "the Lord opened" her heart to receive it. Before she could listen with ears of faith, her heart had to be opened by the Lord. Having come to believe that Jesus was the Christ (Matt. 16:16 and Acts 8:37), Lydia was baptized, as were other converts in Acts (2:41; 8:12; and 18:8).

Q.10 How did Lydia help the missionaries after her conversion? (Acts 16:15)

As an expression of her newfound faith, Lydia attempted to get the missionary to stay in her home. That they had to be "persuaded" or "constrained" might indicate that they did not want to impose on her, or were simply being careful about any perceived impropriety. She finally convinced them to stay at her house, though.

CONCLUSION

Paul and Silas were eager to continue their missionary journey, but the Holy Spirit overruled their proposed itinerary. In God's own time, He made it clear that He wanted them to go to Macedonia, where He had prepared Lydia to receive the word in Philippi.

Our God is sovereign. The Holy Spirit prepares hearts to receive Christ. He directs His servants where He wants them to go and when He wants them to go there. Praise goes to God, who always knows best!

PRAYER

Lord, may the gospel of Christ open not only our eyes to the truth, but our doors to the cause of preaching the gospel. We pray this through Christ Jesus who opened His heart for us, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Sometimes to open a door is the best way to open a heart.

HEART OF THE LESSON

God sometimes closes doors to believers to serve Him (Acts 16:6-7).

When God closed a door of service, He always opens another (Acts 16:8-10).

Proclaim the gospel faithfully wherever God sends you (Acts 16:11-13).

Know that God draws unsaved people to Himself (Acts 16:14).

New believers should be baptized and show hospitality (Acts 16:15).

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Next week's lesson explores the "team ministry" of Aquila and Priscilla—helpers of the Apostle Paul. Acts 18:1 through 19:10 provides the backdrop for this lesson.

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