

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 2
WEEK OF SEPT 27



Growth Group Fall 2020
Outside the City Gate

Week 2 – September 27, 2020 - Acts 16:6-15

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

In Acts 16, we move into the second missionary journey of Paul. It does not begin all that well. Paul, Barnabas, John Mark, and Silas had been traveling together for quite some time when there was a disagreement over who should continue on the trip. This disagreement was settled in the short term by Barnabas and John Mark going their own way, and Paul and Silas going another way. In the long term, Paul and Barnabas and John Mark are reconciled, but in the short-term Paul adds Timothy to his team.

In Acts 16:6, we read about a roadblock placed by the Holy Spirit as Paul seeks to go into the province of Asia. In verse 7, he is stopped by Jesus as he tries to head north. Finally, in verse 10, he gets some direction from God about heading over to Macedonia (modern day Greece). The gospel had never been proclaimed in Europe, so this marks a new opportunity for Gentiles to hear about the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul and his traveling team “got ready at once” and left for Macedonia.

Once they arrived in Philippi and had been there several days, they began to look for a place of worship. But, there was no place to be found. The region of Philippi had a strong Roman influence and therefore did not have a synagogue. Paul was pointed towards a place about a mile and a half outside of the city. It was by a river that he encountered women praying and worshipping God.

The woman highlighted in this passage is Lydia, who was a woman of great wealth (seen in her trade and hospitality) and a “worshipper of God.” When Paul began to teach, Lydia’s heart was opened to the message. In that moment she not only believed, but also began to embody the church. Lydia was uncommonly generous with not only her home, but also her faith. She invited people into her life, both physically and spiritually. She freely shared what was hers. See Acts 16:40, for how the early community of faith gathered at Lydia’s home.

Both Paul and Lydia opened their hearts to the will of God. Paul listened for God’s voice, which led him to the first European conversions. Lydia placed her own status and wealth at the feet of Jesus, and let him use her resources for the glory of the Kingdom.



Exploring the Text

Read Acts 16:6-15

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.

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.

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) What is the best trip/vacation you ever took?
- 2) Share about a time when you had a certain expectation that was not met, but then something better happened instead.
- 3) In verse 10, we are told that Paul and his traveling companions “got ready at once” and set off for Macedonia. They did not delay. Is there something in your life that you keep putting off? Perhaps, something that God is calling you to do, that you are not super motivated to do?
- 4) Can you think of a time when God worked providentially in your life to place you where He wanted you to be, in order to have you help someone else or minister to them? This may have happened on a mission trip, a job relocation, or in the course of everyday life.
- 5) How do you think the apostle Paul prepared himself spiritually to hear and discern the voice of God? How did he know what the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Jesus was saying? How can you prepare yourself to discern the voice of God?
- 6) The term “worshiper of God” was a technical term. It basically meant a Gentile who had not converted to Judaism. It was someone who prayed to God and knew the stories of God, but had not given their life to God. Is there a difference between a “worshiper of God” and a “follower of Jesus?” What does the story of Lydia teach us about conversion and baptism?
- 7) What does it look like to open your heart (verse 14) to God? Have you ever had an experience like this?
- 8) Lydia’s response is one of gratitude and generosity. Where can you practice relational hospitality or generosity this week?