



GROWTH GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Spring Quarter - Lesson 3 - Week of April 17, 2022

Lesson: LYDIA'S IMPACT ON THE CHURCH

Bible Verses: Acts 16:11-40

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

- Where is your private get-away place?
- What is your favorite bible verse?

DISCUSSION

Themes - Spiritual Leadership; Conversion; Baptism

Read Acts 16:11-15.

1. What do you notice about Lydia from these verses?
2. What is a worshiper of God?
3. Acts 16:14 says that the Lord opened Lydia's heart. What does that mean?

The Context

Prior to Paul's arrival in Philippi, he had been trying to travel to Bithynia (Acts 16:7). But the text indicates that the Spirit of Jesus would not allow Paul and his group to enter. We do not know the nature of this warning or refusal by the Spirit, but Paul clearly felt or saw the instruction not to proceed to Bithynia.

When the group reached Troas, Paul had a vision directing him to Macedonia. Therefore, they prepared at once to leave for Macedonia. They boarded a ship and traveled to Philippi. Paul would establish churches in Philippi, in the capital city of Thessalonica, and in Thyatira (another nearby town which was Lydia's hometown).

Background

Under the Jewish customs of that day, a synagogue could be formed only if there were ten or more male heads of households. When there were not enough male Jews to form a synagogue, it was customary to gather at a place of prayer that was in the open air and near a river as an alternative. Since the Ganges River was about one and a half miles west of Philippi, that would be the first logical place for Paul and Silas to look for the Jewish community given the lack of a synagogue.

1. Paul could have easily determined that there was no synagogue in the city. Why would he go outside the city gates looking for the local Jewish community?
2. Why would Paul wait until the Sabbath to go looking for the local Jewish community?
3. Who did Paul find at the place of prayer and what is the significance?
4. Why do you suppose there were no men at the place of prayer?

Philippi, which today is located in northern Greece, was a key city in the region. At that time, Philippi was not open to unrecognized religious gatherings in the city. The meeting outside of town (place of prayer) was for Jews. Lydia was a worshiper of God or a God-fearer, meaning that she was a Gentile follower of the Jewish faith, but not a full convert. The other women at the gathering were other Jews or God-fearers like Lydia. This gathering was taking place because of the absence of a synagogue.

What Do We Know?

Being led by the Spirit, Paul was not just traveling around the area and visiting friends. The fact that Paul went looking for a place of prayer probably means that there were fewer than ten practicing Jewish families in Philippi. He met Lydia at this place of prayer. Later, Paul encountered a slave girl on his way to the same place. This encounter led to his imprisonment along with Silas. When they were released from prison, they went to Lydia's house where other believers were gathered. Lydia's leadership and influence were invaluable for the church.

1. What is the evidence of Lydia's conversion?
2. Is there anything significant about the fact that Lydia's household was also baptized? What might this mean or imply?

PRAYER FOCUS:

God, help me to impact the church by the service that I provide.