

Acts 16 Bible Study

Note the influence of the four distinct factors in this church planting passage:

1. The Holy Spirit guiding leaders to unlikely groups and preparing hearts in those groups
2. Prayer as a point of connection with not-yet-believers
3. Relationship ties quickly drawing family and friend-groups (oikos) into new relevant church bodies
4. The absence of money and facilities

v. 1-3 What simple Christian leadership traits did Paul see in Timothy?

v. 6-7 What is the role of the Holy Spirit here?

v. 9-10 Can God still guide us to the people He has been making spiritually hungry, even without the expense of events, activities, and advertising?

- Paul's response was immediate...what did he expect to find in Macedonia?

v. 11-13

- What do you imagine Paul was doing those first few days in the city?
- How many women were at the riverside? How much were women valued? Is this what Paul expected, based on the vision?
- How did Paul respond to the group he found?
- Did Paul find them by man's wisdom, or God's guidance, or both? Explain.

v. 14-15

- How long had God been working in Lydia's heart? Why does it seem like a God-directed encounter that brought Paul and Lydia together?
- Was Lydia's household (family/servants/oikos) with her at the river, or did she take Paul to them in her home?
- Who baptized them? Where?
- This group became a church, or at least the embryo of a church, in v. 15, since they began to be baptized...agree or disagree?

v. 22-25

- How successful did Paul and Silas feel at this point?
- How did they respond?

v. 26-34

What factors were at work in the jailer's life to make him open to the gospel? Was the Holy Spirit using a crisis in life to open his heart?

- Would Paul have ever targeted the women's group or the jailer with his own wisdom?
- How did Paul manage to speak to the jailer's household (family/servants/oikos)? Were they at the jail, or did he take Paul home?
- This became a church, or the embryo of a church, in v. 33, since they began to be baptized...agree or disagree?

- Why was the jailer not at the riverbank with Lydia?

- Would her house and his join together now?

Summary:

- The Holy Spirit led Paul to two groups he would never have picked out with his own wisdom: a woman and her household, and a jailer and his household.
- Prayer became the bridge between Paul's gospel and Lydia's spiritual hunger.

- If God has been preparing a person to hear about Christ, they are already spiritually hungry and often open to prayer.
- If you connect with someone who is open to prayer, that can usually become a bridge to all God wants to do in his or her life.
- Both Lydia and the jailer had an impact on their families and friends, their circle of influence, their oikos. The new church plants crystallized around these relationships, not around events/activities/ programs. What God is doing in one life profoundly touches others who are close to that person.
- All of this happened at a riverbank, a prison, and two homes that were adequate, relevant, and cost free.