

Bible e-Study Women of the New Testament #9

Lydia and the Fortune Teller.

The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. Acts 16:14b

NUGGET – When we read about Lydia and her heart being opened by the Lord, it is vital to understanding her place in the New Testament that we know where her town is and how Paul came to be there. Read [Acts 16:1-13](#) to get the picture. [Also look at the map that shows this journey.](#) (This map is part of a wonderful set of maps. They allow you see details of the places Paul traveled and where they are in relation to modern geography. Thanks to the hard work of the people at [apostlepaulthefilm.com](#) © 2004 Lukas Media LLC. All Rights Reserved.)

Now that you've seen where Paul was on this second missionary journey before he went to the town of Philippi, you can appreciate that Lydia is the first Christian convert on the European continent! When Paul took the trip from Troas to Samothrace, he left what is modern day Turkey / Asia and came to Greece / Europe. And there Lydia, already a person who, Luke (the author of Acts) tells us in 16:14a, was a worshipper of God. She would be a proselyte, a non-ethnic Jew who had been converted to Judaism.

She had been prepared by God before Paul's arrival to hear his message of the Messiah. It says that '*The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message*'. That's important to us for 2 reasons:

1. It is God who opens hearts, Who changes hearts, no one else. And,
2. for a person to respond to the message, the message has to be given.

The grace of God we see for Lydia is the same grace to us. He has prepared our hearts and He has provided us with messengers of His word right where we are. He has opened each of our hearts by His Holy Spirit to hear and receive the message that Lydia received, that Christ shows us that God loves us.

That love is ours. We are God's chosen people by God's design. He used this European woman to show that the message of Christ is truly meant for the whole world. You and I are a part of that heritage from Lydia. You and I are part of the story of God's love and there are those around us who may also be ready to hear that same message.

APPLICATION –

1. Next time you're preparing a meal think about all the steps needed to bring that meal to the lips of others. Be reminded of all the things that God did in preparing you to receive the Holy Meal of Christ's body and blood that refreshes and restores your soul with forgiveness.
2. What 2 or 3 parts of the story of the good news of Jesus most readily touch your heart? Maybe those are the parts that someone you know will find touches their heart also.

PRAY – Thank God for Lydia and the heritage we share with her, and for God's kindness to us through His grace that has opened our hearts to respond to Jesus.

Going Deeper together. We meet in the Fellowship Hall during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
'HEARING, SHARING AND LIVING THE GOSPEL'



Rev. Thomas A. Rhodes, Pastor
PO Box 5, 600 East Aldrich Road, Bolivar, MO 65613
(417) 326-5506 www.zionlutheranbolivar.org

NOTICE: This email and any file transmitted are confidential and/or legally privileged and intended only for the person(s) directly addressed. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, copying, transmission, distribution, or other forms of dissemination is strictly prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately and permanently delete the email and files, if any.

GOING DEEPER

Paul's vision in [Acts 16:9-10](#) was of a man in Macedonia, not a woman, yet he did not hesitate to share with the gathered women the message of Christ. We too must be prepared to share Christ's good news with those we may not expect too. God had used the dream of a man of Macedonia asking for help in the Lord, but it was a woman who first responded. It was this woman that God had prepared.

She was not what Paul's dream included, but that just helps us to see that God has His own ways of moving in His directions and for His purposes. Where have you seen this played out in your life? What did God do to prepare you to receive the message of Jesus' good news? Who and what did God use in your life to do that?

Now read [Acts 16:11-15](#). Following her receiving the message of Christ Lydia was baptized. Different from most of us, Lydia was baptized following her hearing the message of Paul regarding Jesus. That makes our efforts of telling the message of God's love very important as parents and sponsors and the congregation of those children baptized among us. Lydia was baptized in obedience to the command of Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 to 'go and baptize all nations, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.'" Given what we've read regarding Lydia, what affect does that have on how we view evangelism? And also given God's work in Lydia's life, what might be seen as our collective responsibility toward those who've been baptized here?

Look now at [Acts 16:16-19](#). This slave girl is a good example of what we are to Satan. We are slaves to keep him entertained and in riches, but his riches are fed by keeping our souls in poverty from God's word. As a result of what Paul had done in freeing this girl from her evil spirit her owners attacked Paul and the others. Satan hates to lose and will attack those who bring the light of God's love to others.

Read through the rest of chapter 16 [verses 20-40](#) to see what Paul and Silas went through as a result of Satan's persecution. From Lydia's conversion to the return of Paul and Silas to Lydia's house at the end of the chapter much has happened. We see both good things and hard things. We see that God's story of love changes hearts, lives and whole families. Having read through this, what or who stood out for you in a new or fresh way? How might what we've seen Paul and Silas endure be a comfort or confrontive to us?

Before we close notice that Lydia's hospitality that came into evidence in verse 15 was repeated in verse 40. Her generous hospitality to Paul and Silas evidently had an impact on others as in verse 40 we are told they 'met with the brothers and encouraged them' before leaving. It appears her home had become a place known among believers.

God comes into our lives with His love and transforms us as it did Lydia. God's love made her new and makes us new. The Lord makes His dwelling, His home, in our hearts and our lives become something new. We become recognized for Who lives within us, as Lydia and her home had become.

Having this love of God received into our hearts and lives gives us a power for living that we cannot have apart from the grace of Christ. What has Lydia, and the events surrounding her, opened your eyes to as possible in your maturing in living the grace of Christ daily?

Peace to you in the love of God, which Lydia displayed, Pastor Rhodes.