

Acts 16:11-40

November 30, 2025



CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon or passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon or passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon or read in today's passage?

MAIN POINT

God works in and through ordinary people and extraordinary circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What are your takeaways from our study of Acts so far?

Will someone recap what we studied about Paul's journeys last week?

Last week we read about the start of Paul's second missionary journey, and the firm guidance they received from the Holy Spirit. God had big plans for their ministry in Macedonia, and we will read about some of the ways God worked through Paul and his companions on this journey.



UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 16:11-15.

Revisit the verses right before this passage. How did Paul see immediate fruit from his obedience to God's call?

How did Paul and his companions take natural opportunities to share with those they met? How might we do the same?

How did the conversion of Lydia spread to others?

When Paul and his companions ended their long journey at sea, they landed, per the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in Macedonia, in the Roman colony Philippi. There they met Lydia.

Lydia, a Gentile living in Philippi, feared God and was participating in a Sabbath gathering when she heard Paul and Silas's message. Note how Scripture describes her conversion: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying" (v.14). We are all called to sow seeds of the gospel like Paul and Silas did, but it's the Lord who changes hearts.

After being baptized, Lydia urged Paul and his companions to stay in her home. Context tells us Lydia was a woman of some apparent means (purple cloth was a luxury good in the Roman empire). They accepted, and thus God used Lydia to help provide for Paul and his crew in Philippi. This is the gift of hospitality at work, and a beautiful example of someone being a good steward of their financial resources.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 16:16-24.

What stands out about the slave girl described? How was she treated and what happened to her?

How did God use both the girl's words and the disciples' actions to show His power?

Paul and Silas did the right thing but were punished. How might Christians face a similar dilemma today?

In this passage, we meet yet another interesting woman, an exploited slave girl. She was possessed by an evil spirit, and her owners used the spirit's fortune-telling ability for financial gain. After several days of the girl heralding them as "servants of the Most High God" (v.17), Paul commanded the spirit to leave her, and it did.



Her owners' response to this miracle hints at the type of treatment she may have received. They were less concerned about her well-being than the well-being of their pocketbooks. We don't know what ultimately happened to the girl, but it is clear she was delivered from the evil spirit. This incident landed Paul and Silas in hot water. After being severely flogged with rods (vv.22-23), they were thrown in jail.

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ACTS 16:25-40.

What is notable in this passage?

What do we learn about Paul and Silas's character here? What was unexpected in their response to the events?

What can we learn about sharing our faith from this passage?

After being brutally beaten and thrown in jail, Paul and Silas turned to the Lord in singing and prayer. In apparent response, God sent an earthquake to open the doors and loosen the chains. The jailer understood this for what it was (an act of God). Roman guards were responsible for serving out the sentences of any prisoners who escaped on their watch, so his plan to kill himself was to avoid this fate. But Paul saved his life by calling out that everyone was still there.

God was at work! Here, at midnight in the prison, the jailer came to faith and was later baptized (along with the rest of his household). Paul and Silas started the night beaten and in chains and ended the night rejoicing over the new believers and enjoying the care and hospitality of the jailer. What a joyful turnaround!

In the morning, the chief magistrates sent for Paul and Silas's release. As Roman citizens, their beating and imprisonment without trial was illegal and Paul knew it. Knowing that their own actions were criminal, the magistrates were justifiably afraid. Paul and Silas were urged to leave town, but first, they stopped by Lydia's house and encouraged the believers there.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How did God work in surprising ways in this passage?

We read about Lydia meeting a need for Paul and his companions. What are some needs we could help meet for those around us in our community?

How did Paul and Silas's endurance in suffering give opportunity to share the gospel? Where do we have these opportunities?



PRAYER

Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.

Thank God for working in the lives of everyday people like Lydia, the slave girl, and the jailer. Ask for His help in being bold in the face of opposition, and for courage and boldness as you share the gospel in your community.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.

December 7, 2025 --- Acts 17:1-15



COMMENTARY

Acts 16:11-40

Witnessing in Philippi (16:11–40).

Paul preached first in the city of Philippi, in the northeastern section of Macedonia. It was a Roman colony city, with a nucleus of Roman citizens, Roman government, and a major Roman highway running through it. We first learn of Paul's Roman citizenship in the course of his Philippian ministry. Luke's account falls into four main parts.

1 Founding a Church with Lydia (16:11–15).

Philippi evidently did not have a Jewish community large enough to support a synagogue. But, there was a Jewish place of prayer outside the city, mainly attended by women. On the Sabbath, Paul joined them there for worship. One of them, Lydia, was a Gentile God-fearer, like Cornelius. She was a woman of some means. Having believed and been baptized, she invited Paul and his entourage to her home. Subsequently, the Christians of Philippi held their house church at Lydia's.

2 Healing a Possessed Servant Girl (16:16–24).

As Paul witnessed in Philippi, he was pestered by a servant girl who was possessed by a spirit with predictive powers. The spirit incessantly proclaimed Paul's relationship to God and the saving power of his message. Annoyed by the demon and feeling compassion for the girl, who was being exploited by her owners, Paul exorcised the spirit. Having lost a source of income, the owners hauled Paul before the town magistrates. Their charges against him were false but carried enough conviction with the authorities to have Paul and Silas flogged and thrown into jail.

3 Converting a Jailer's Household (16:25–34).

Like the apostles before them (5:17–21), Paul and Silas were miraculously delivered from their confinement, by an earthquake in the night. Also, like the apostles, they did not flee, but remained at the scene to bear witness. The jailer expected to lose his life for loss of the prisoners. Instead, he gained life, true life in Christ through the witness of Paul and Silas. They witnessed to all his household. All were baptized. Joy filled their home.

4 Humbling the City Magistrates (16:35–40).

The next day, realizing that Paul and Silas had committed no real offense, the town magistrates sent orders to the jailer to release them. Paul would not go. He divulged his Roman citizenship and noted that he and Silas had been scourged without a hearing, which was strictly forbidden for Roman citizens. He demanded that the magistrates come with a personal apology and escort them out. Paul realized this was an important precedent. Preaching the gospel was not an offense. He had broken no laws. He wanted the record set straight—not just in Philippi but wherever he witnessed.

