

## BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

**Sermon:** “The Call of Lydia” from the “Call Stories” sermon series

**Scripture:** Acts 16:6-15

### Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of Acts, we find Paul and Silas in the midst of their evangelistic tour traveling “through the area of Phrygia and Galatia...” and then “...headed north for the province of Bithynia” but were prevented from proceeding any further by the Holy Spirit. In a dream, Paul envisioned a man from Macedonia in northern Greece “...pleading with him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us!’. Paul and Silas left at once for Macedonia to “preach the Good News there.”
- It is interesting to note that beginning with verse 10, the narrative shifts from third person to first person. According to the Book of Acts Shepherd’s Notes, “This begins one of the “we” passages in Acts which begins and ends in Philippi. The second of the “we” section begins again when the missionaries return to Philippi (20:5-15). One possible explanation for this is that Luke was part of Paul’s vision and a resident of Philippi.”
- Upon arriving to Philippi, a major port city in Macedonia, Paul and Silas met with a small group during the Sabbath for prayer.
- Among those that gathered for prayer was a woman named Lydia, who is a successful merchant of expensive purple cloth. Verse 14 says, “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.”
- Verse 15 concludes this section with, “When she (Lydia) 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. It is not certain who exactly comprised Lydia’s household, but we do know that she was the head of it.
- Lydia opening her home to Paul and his missionary team both points to her genuine conversion and her sense of hospitality in using her home as a gathering place for a Christian community.

### Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Today's Scripture is a scene from Paul's second of three mission trips in Acts.
- Paul's objective in his second mission trip was to proclaim the gospel from east to west, in Asia Minor. His objective was to go from Antioch of Pisidia to Colossae, and finally to Ephesus. However, verse 6 says they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit from preaching the gospel there.
- Led by the Spirit: Paul's initial plans were changed and revised by the Holy Spirit! We must remember, the missionary is not in charge of the mission...the Holy Spirit is. The missionary's (and disciple's) task is to always be Spirit led. We see that this does not frustrate Paul's task but enhances it!
- As we see in life, we live within the "Plan B". Our initial ways and desires are not always aligned with what God wills for us. We are then forced to either quit or adapt. We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails!
- For Paul, Macedonia wasn't even on his radar when he embarked on his second mission trip. The Holy Spirit altered his course and re-routed his life there.
- After Paul's vision, verse 10 says, "They (we) *immediately* set sail for Macedonia, convinced that God had called them to share the Gospel there." Notice that the pronoun used here is *we* and not *they*. Luke shifts the pronoun because he joins the mission team! It is Paul, Timothy, Silas and Luke on this mission!
- Paul normally started his mission at a synagogue, however, there isn't one available for him in Philippi. As the missionaries looked for a place to begin, they came across a group of women outside the city engaged in prayer. One of the women there was Lydia. She was described as a "God-fearer" and a dealer in purple cloth! She was sent to Philippi to open a branch for her business.
- Lydia listens intently to Paul's message and was converted. Paul baptized her, and her entire household. Her response after conversion is an act of hospitality to Paul and his team. Her home later became a home to traveling missionaries.
- The mission is not ours to control, but ours to share. We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails. When we do, we can be assured that the Spirit is moving, the mission is expanding and God is already writing the first chapter of the new life that awaits us!

**Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion**

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- In this section of Acts, in what ways did the Holy Spirit guide the movement of the Gospel message? Why?
- Who is Lydia? How did she help to spread the Gospel message in her own community?
- What can we learn about hospitality from Lydia? In what ways do you demonstrate hospitality to others?
- Why was Lydia's household baptized after Lydia responded in faith to the Good News?
- Have you ever been kept from doing something that you had initially wanted (or "blocked" by the Holy Spirit)? What happened? What was the outcome?

