

Paul Goes to Macedonia

(Acts 15:40 — 16:15)

Pre-Session Warm Up

We have been learning a lot about the Holy Spirit this year as we have been studying the book of Acts. Although the Holy Spirit is invisible, He is always at work in our lives leading us and guiding us and telling us how to live our lives in a way that pleases God.

Have you ever experienced the Holy Spirit speaking to you? He wants to speak to you while you are praying to Him or while you are reading your Bible. Perhaps He has spoken to you in a dream. You have to learn to pay close attention to Him so you don't miss anything He wants to say to you. [Teacher, tell the children about one of your experiences.]

As you spend time with Him, you will come to recognize His voice in your heart. Jesus told us, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me."* (John 10:27)

When you walk with Jesus daily, you will come to recognize when the Holy Spirit is telling you to STOP and when to GO. [Teacher, hold up Stop and Go signs.] He wants to warn you when there is danger ahead, or if there is a pothole to watch out for, or a cliff you might go over if you're not careful.

Opening Prayer

Father, thank You that You care so much for us that You don't just leave us to do life on our own. You are always with us, leading and guiding us in the way we should go. Help me to learn to recognize Your voice like how a sheep knows his shepherd's voice. Then give us the desire to do what you tell us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalms 23:3b)

And/or

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. (Rom 8:14)

Lesson

Today we will continue the adventures of Paul. The last few weeks we have learned that Paul and Barnabas' traveled all over to start churches in many places. At the end of their trip, they returned to Antioch of Syria and there they stayed with the believers for a few years, teaching them the word of God. [Teacher, use your Bible times map!]

Since it had been a few years since he had visited with all the churches he started on his trip with Barnabas, he was anxious to go back to visit the people and see how they were doing.

At the end of chapter 15, Paul asked a man by the name of **Silas**, to go with him to visit some of the places he had set up churches. We will learn more about him in the coming weeks.

Acts 15:40-41

*Paul chose **Silas**, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord's gracious care. (41) Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there.*

How happy the believers must have been to see Paul again!

As we turn to chapter 16, Paul meets up with another man we'll be getting to know quite well in the weeks to come, **Timothy**.

Acts 16:1-2

*Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named **Timothy**. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. (2) **Timothy was well thought of by the believers** in Lystra and Iconium.*

It says that *Timothy was well thought of* by the other believers. When people speak about you do they speak well of you? Having a good reputation is important for a follower of Jesus.

Paul really thought very well of Timothy, too, and took a special interest in teaching him the ways of the Lord. Later Paul leaves Timothy to be the pastor of a church in Ephesus. After he left him there, Paul wrote two letters to Timothy that we have in our Bibles. Look in your Table of Contents and find the books of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

Paul, Silas and Timothy began to travel from town-to-town visiting the believers. As they stopped in each town, they shared the letter that the leaders in Jerusalem had written for the Gentile believers that we learned about last week.

Who remembers what the letter was about? The letter was written to encourage both Jews and Gentiles to be respectful of each other. In Acts chapter 10 we learned that God has no favorites; He loves both Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 10:34) He wants all believers to get along.

Acts 16:5

So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.

From there Paul wanted to go into Asia to start churches, but the Holy Spirit stopped him from going there.

Acts 16:6

*Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because **the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia** at that time.*

Can you see how the Holy Spirit directed Paul? We don't know exactly how the Holy Spirit stopped Paul, but he knew he was not to go in the direction he was planning to travel *at that time*. (God had other plans for Paul, as we will see.)

One night God spoke to Paul in a vision. A vision is like a dream, only you are not asleep, you're wide awake.

Acts 16:9-10

*That night Paul had a **vision**: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" (10) So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.*

Paul knew this vision was from God so he immediately obeyed what he knew the Holy Spirit was telling him to do. So, they jumped on a ship and headed for Macedonia. At this point another man joins Paul's team. His name was **Luke**.

Are you familiar with the Gospel of Luke? Luke not only wrote that book of the Bible, but he also was the author of the book of Acts, the book we are reading and studying right now.

So off they went and eventually Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke ended up in Philippi. [Show on map.]

Usually when Paul came in to a new town, on the Sabbath, he would go to the local synagogue (the Jewish place of worship) where he would tell the Jews the Good News about Jesus. But Philippi did not have a synagogue because there weren't very many Jewish people living there.

So, Paul and his team went down to the riverside to have a time of prayer. When they arrived, there were some women already there praying and worshipping God. One of the women was named **Lydia**.

Paul and his friends began to tell these women about Jesus.

Acts 16:13-14

***On the Sabbath** we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. (14) One of*

them was **Lydia** from Thyatira, **a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God**. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying.

What can we know about Lydia from these verses?

First, we learn that she was *a merchant of expensive purple cloth*. That means she sold purple cloth [Show a piece of purple cloth]. In other words, **she was a business woman**. That's pretty remarkable because not many women had their own businesses in those days. So, we knew that **she was a wise woman**.

Also, Lydia must have been **very rich** because she sold *expensive purple cloth*. Purple cloth was very hard to get because it was very expensive and time consuming to make. The dye she used would have come from tiny sea shells and she would have had to have a lot of shells to make even one small batch of purple dye. Only people in royalty or powerful rulers could afford to wear purple. So, Lydia must have been a rich business woman.

But we also know that **she loved God and worshiped Him** because Paul found her **on the Sabbath** down by the riverside praying and **worshipping God** with some other women.

Yet, she had never heard the message of Salvation.

Paul told her that Jesus had died for her sins. As Paul was teaching the women by the river about what Jesus had done for them, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to listen to Paul's words. She paid close attention to Paul as he told how Jesus died for the sins of everyone in the world and that He came back to life again. And that anyone who believes in Jesus will have eternal life with Him in heaven.

As she listened to Paul, the Holy Spirit opened her heart and she immediately believed that Jesus is the one true God who has power over death and life. She knew she needed the power of the Holy Spirit and gladly gave her heart to God. Then she immediately wanted to be baptized.

Acts 16:15

She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.

We learn here that Lydia **had a "household"**. In other words, many people lived with her in her home. These were probably the people who worked for her, dying the purple cloth. At any rate, we can see that Lydia was **well respected** by the people who lived with her as she convinced her whole household to accept Jesus and be baptized.

We also learn that **Lydia was hospitable**. She knew that Paul and his team needed a place to sleep and food to eat, so she invited them to stay with her at her home. She was not only rich enough to have a household, but **her home was large** enough for Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke to stay with her. And **she was generous** enough to want to take care of Paul and his team for as long as they wanted to stay with her.

So, we have learned a lot about Lydia, haven't we? [Let the children recall some of the things they learned about Lydia.] She was a smart business woman who had a desire to know God and who was respected, hospitable and generous.

More important than Lydia's story, I do not want you to miss the work of the Holy Spirit in this week's lesson.

Let's review what we learned about the leading of the Holy Spirit this week:

In **Acts 15:41** Paul was traveling throughout Syria, strengthening the churches and he happened to meet **Timothy**. Was this just by chance, or was this the Holy Spirit's doing?

As we will learn, Timothy will become a very important part of God's work in the early church.

In **Acts 16:6** we learned that the Holy Spirit stopped Paul going to Asia to tell people about Jesus. God had other plans for Paul. He wanted Paul to go to Macedonia at that time. There was a special woman named Lydia living in Philippi that God wanted Paul to meet.

In **Acts 16:9** we learned that the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul through a vision. There are many ways that the Lord speaks to us. But you must learn to listen for His voice. The Lord wants to show you what to do and what not to do; what to do and what not to do.

One way He speaks to us is by giving us either peace about something we are planning to do or by giving us an uneasy feeling down in our heart. Have you ever had second thoughts about doing something or saying something? [Teacher, discuss.]

Because Paul obeyed what he knew God was telling him, he met **Luke**, who eventually would write the very book we are reading and studying right now.

In **Acts 16:13** we learned that Paul went down to the riverside and just happened to meet Lydia. Was this just by chance, or was this the Holy Spirit's doing?

Because Lydia was a very important business woman who was well respected by her employees, her whole household was saved and then she provided Paul's team with a good safe place to sleep and food to eat.

What do you think is the best way to learn to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit in your life? [Let the children respond.]

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we are so grateful that You do everything You can to get our attention. You speak to us as we read our Bibles, as we pray, and even through our dreams. It's an amazing thing to realize that You, the Creator of the whole universe, wants to talk to us individually and personally. It's because You love each us so much. Help us to recognize Your voice. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Use the following questions in a game or discussion.

1. As Paul, Silas and Timothy stopped in each town, what did they share with the believers? (The letter that the leaders in Jerusalem had written for the Gentile believers.)
2. What was the letter about? (The letter was written to encourage both Jews and Gentiles to be respectful of each other.)
3. When Paul wanted to go into Asia to share the gospel, what happened? (The Holy Spirit stopped him from going.)
4. How did Paul know God wanted him to go to Macedonia instead of Asia? (Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come and help them.)
5. God spoke to Paul in a vision. What is a vision? (It's like a dream, but you're awake.)
6. Who wrote the book of Acts? (Luke.)
7. Where did Paul usually go to share the gospel when he came into a new town? (A Jewish synagogue.)
8. Because there was no synagogue in Philippi, where did Paul go on the Sabbath? (The riverside.)
9. Who did Paul and his friends meet at the riverside? (Lydia and some women.)
10. What were the women doing? (Praying and worshiping God.)
11. What was Lydia's job? (She sold purple cloth.)

12. Who opened Lydia's heart to listen to Paul's message? (The Holy Spirit.)
13. What did Lydia and the people in her house do when they heard about Jesus? (They were baptized.)
14. What do you need to do that would help you know when God is telling you to go somewhere and when He wants to stop you from doing something? (Learn to listen for His voice through prayer and Bible study.)

