Small Group Guide

"The Hope We Share" -- Sharing Jesus With Our Words

Based on Acts 16

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Encourage group members to read Acts 16:1-15 before gathering. Open your time together in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead your conversation just as He led Paul and Timothy throughout this passage.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

These six practical principles from Acts 16 form the foundation of this week's message:

1. **The Holy Spirit leads** -- Sharing Jesus begins with paying attention to where the Spirit is already at work in the people around you.
2. **God prepares you in advance** -- Your background, experiences, culture, and even your quirks may be exactly what God needs for a specific person.
3. **Cultural context matters** -- Jesus is the answer to every story in every culture. Who God made you to be is part of His plan.
4. **It starts with a conversation** -- Evangelism is not a monologue. It involves asking questions, listening well, and following the Spirit's lead in what to share or not share.
5. **God prepares others in advance** -- It is God who opens hearts. Our role is to be present and willing, not to manufacture results.
6. **It is a group effort** -- Every believer participates, but not in the same way. Our different gifts, resources, and relationships all work together in the mission.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening -- Getting Into the Conversation

1. The sermon opened with a story about running shoes and how naturally we share things that have genuinely helped us. Think of something you have enthusiastically recommended to someone recently -- a product, a restaurant, a show, a book. What made you want to tell others about it?
2. What is your honest reaction when you hear the word "evangelism"? Does it feel exciting, intimidating, awkward, or something else? Where do you think that reaction comes from?

Digging In -- From the Sermon and Scripture

3. In Acts 16, the Holy Spirit blocked Paul and Timothy from going to what seemed like the most logical destinations before finally directing them to Macedonia. Have you ever experienced a closed door that later made sense in hindsight? What did you learn from that experience about trusting God's timing?
4. Pastor Milissa highlighted that Timothy's Greek heritage was not accidental -- God had prepared him specifically for a mission in Greece before the call ever came. In what ways do you think God has uniquely prepared you -- through your background, your relationships, your work, your culture, or your experiences -- to connect with specific people around you?
5. When Paul and Timothy arrived in Philippi, they sat down with the women gathered at the river. The sermon noted that sitting down suggests a conversation, not a speech -- and that they could only have known details about Lydia because they asked questions and listened. How does this picture of evangelism compare to the way you have typically thought about sharing your faith?
6. The text says "the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." Paul did not open her heart -- God did. How does it change the pressure you feel around sharing Jesus when you recognize that the results are in God's hands and not yours?
7. The sermon described how Lydia immediately used her gift of generosity to support Paul and Timothy's mission. How do you see your own spiritual gifts -- whether generosity, hospitality, teaching, compassion, or others -- as part of the broader mission of sharing Jesus, even if you are not the one having the direct faith conversation?

Reflecting Personally

8. The story of Jay, Craig, and Gerry illustrated how God can connect people through surprisingly specific and seemingly random details -- card tricks in the Winnipeg airport, and a small town in British Columbia. Have you ever experienced a moment like this, where a connection felt too specific to be coincidence? What happened?
9. The sermon noted that 64% of Canadians view Christians as judgmental, even while 76% view Jesus as loving. How does that gap challenge you personally? Is there anything in the way you engage with people around you that might be contributing to that perception, even unintentionally?
10. Pastor Milissa asked two specific questions for personal prayer: Who is God asking you to invite, and how is God asking you to give? Take a moment as a group to sit with those questions. Is anyone willing to share a name or a sense of direction that came to mind?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to act on before your group meets again:

- **Pray specifically.** Write down the name of one or two people God has placed on your heart. Commit to praying for them daily this week, asking the Holy Spirit to prepare their heart and open a natural door for conversation.
- **Pay attention.** This week, notice the people who come to mind unexpectedly, the conversations that open up naturally, or the moments that feel like more than coincidence. Practice asking yourself: Is the Holy Spirit opening a door here?
- **Start a conversation.** You do not need to have all the answers. Simply ask someone a genuine question about their life -- what they are going through, what they are thinking about, what they believe. Listen more than you speak.
- **Invite someone.** Extend a personal, specific invitation to someone in your life to join you for a Christmas Eve service (2:00 | 4:00 | 6:00) or the upcoming Alpha session (January 21). A personal invitation from someone they trust carries far more weight than an advertisement.
- **Reflect on your gifts.** Spend some time this week considering how your particular gifts, financial resources, or relationships might play a role in the broader mission of your church community. Talk to a pastor or group leader if you want help identifying where you might plug in.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your group time by praying for the specific people each member named during discussion. Ask the Holy Spirit to:

- Soften hearts and open doors for honest conversation
- Give each group member courage and sensitivity to follow His lead
- Work through the unique gifts, backgrounds, and relationships represented in your group
- Bring many people into a living relationship with Jesus this season

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