

## Acts 16:16-40 - Girl with Spirit of Divination and Paul's Imprisonment

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### Message to Conversation Guide

#### Acts 16:16-40

16 Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." 18 She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her. 19 When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. 20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar 21 by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice." 22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. 23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. 24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. 27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God — he and his whole family. 35 When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: "Release those men." 36 The jailer told Paul, "The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace." 37 But Paul said to the officers: "They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out." 38 The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. 39 They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. 40 After Paul and

Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left. NIV

### Discussion Questions

1. The story we are reading today opens with Paul on his way to a place of prayer (**Acts 16:16**). What is the significance of that statement how does it challenge us to make prayer a greater priority in our lives? **Acts 16:16** says that Paul was going to a place of prayer, that is a specific location for prayer. Do you have a special place where you pray? How does the verse below indicate that Jesus and the disciples had a special place to pray?

#### **John 18:1-2**

*18:1 When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it. 2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.* NIV

2. The slave girl that Paul met on the way to prayer was possessed with a spirit of divination. Read and discuss the concept of “spirit of divination” as defined below:

*Spirit of divination - lit “a python spirit” The term originally referred to a mythical serpent believed to guard the temple and oracle of the Gk god Apollo at Delphi. Later the phrase meant a demon -possessed person or even a ventriloquist. The people at Philippi must have thought of her as having a demon that could tell fortunes. The slave girl had a spirit of divination, or literally “a spirit, a python,” characterizing her as one inspired by Apollo, the god worshiped at Pytho (Delphi). Reformation Study Bible, 1945. Spirit-Filled Life Bible, 1958.*

3. How did the owners of the slave girl exploit her for their benefit? How does their relationship with their slave girl illustrate a lopsided relationship ( vs. **16c, & 19**)
4. How did Paul and Silas respond to their persecution and incarceration according to **Acts 16:25**? What does this teach us about what we learn about our character in times of difficulty?
5. Why was the jailer upset when the earthquake occurred and why was he about to take his own life? **Acts 16:27**
6. What was Paul's guidance on how he could be saved and what did he do immediately after he was saved and who participated with him in that act? **Acts 16:31-33.**

7. Whose house did Paul and Silas visit before leaving town? How was her conversion the cause of a domino effect in Philippi? **Acts 16:40**