



## Summary

What does it truly cost to carry the gospel to the world? In this study through Acts 16, we are confronted with the staggering physical, emotional, and spiritual sacrifices made by those who first brought the message of Christ to Western civilization. We explore the rugged terrain of the Cilician Gates, a mountain pass so narrow that history records only two men could walk through it shoulder to shoulder, and we begin to understand that the faith we hold today was carried to us at an enormous price. The central lesson here is one of radical submission for the sake of the gospel. We see it in Timothy, a young man of sterling reputation and deep biblical knowledge, who was asked to yield his own flesh not because it was required for salvation, but because his willingness to sacrifice personal comfort for the unhindered spread of the gospel was the very first test of his ministry character. The question it raises for each of us is deeply personal: what are we willing to lay down so that nothing in us becomes a stumbling block to someone else hearing the truth of Christ? The spiritual insight here cuts straight to the heart of what it means to live not for ourselves but for the gospel.





## Points

**Title: Redirected for the Gospel: Sovereignty, Submission, and the Spread of the Faith**

**Sermon Summary:** Drawing from Acts 16:1-10, this sermon explores the second missionary journey of Paul and Silas, highlighting the extraordinary physical, spiritual, and personal sacrifices made to carry the gospel westward into Europe. The pastor emphasizes three transformative moments: the addition of Timothy to the ministry team and his willingness to submit his flesh for the sake of the gospel's unhindered advance; the Holy Spirit's sovereign redirection of Paul away from Asia and toward Macedonia; and the quiet inclusion of Dr. Luke into the team. Together, these moments illustrate how God's sovereignty and man's free will work in concert, and how the gospel's arrival in Western Europe directly traces back to these divine redirections -- with implications for every believer of Western heritage who has received the faith as a result.

### **Key Points:**

- - The physical hardship of Paul and Silas's missionary journey, including traversing 2,800 miles largely on foot and passing through the narrow and dangerous Cilician Gates, should cultivate fresh appreciation for the effort expended to bring the gospel to the Western world
- - Timothy's circumcision was not a theological necessity but a voluntary act of submission to godly leadership and a willingness to lay down personal liberty so that the gospel would not be hindered among Jewish audiences
- - Paul's own conviction, expressed in 1 Corinthians 9, that he would become all things to all people for the sake of winning souls, was the driving principle behind his request of Timothy
- - The distinction between Timothy's circumcision and Paul's refusal to allow Titus to be circumcised illustrates that context and purpose determine application -- Titus was a Gentile, and his circumcision would have undermined the gospel of grace rather than advanced it
- - God's sovereignty is demonstrated in the closing of doors to Asia and the opening of doors to Macedonia, while man's free will is demonstrated in Paul's immediate and willing response to that redirection
- - A vision given by God for ministry is intended to stir and excite the recipient, providing motivation to press through difficulty
- - The pronoun shift from "they" to "we" in verse 10 signals the quiet addition of Dr. Luke to the team, who would go on to write more words in the New Testament than any other author
- - Redirection is a recurring and critical feature of ministry life, and a willingness to be redirected by God is as important as the initial call to serve
- - Elders and ministry leaders voluntarily holding themselves to a higher standard in matters of personal liberty is a present-day application of the principle Timothy demonstrated -- choosing not to stumble others over personal freedoms
- - Every Western believer who has received the gospel is, in a meaningful sense, a descendant of God's sovereign redirection of Paul toward Macedonia on this journey



#### Scripture Reference:

- - Acts 16:1-10 (primary passage)
- - Acts 15:41
- - 1 Corinthians 7:17-24
- - 1 Corinthians 9:19-23
- - 2 Timothy 1:3-5
- - 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- - Galatians 2:3-5
- - Colossians 4:14
- - John 3:16

#### Stories:

- - The pastor recounts the story of how he and his wife Tina were redirected from planting a church in Destin, Florida, to Panama City Beach, and ultimately to Naples, through a series of closed doors and a quiet word from the Lord -- illustrating how God guides through subjective likes, dislikes, and sovereign arrangement
- - The history of the Cilician Gates is referenced, noting that Alexander the Great passed through them in 333 BC and that the pass is so narrow forty Turkish soldiers held off five hundred French soldiers in 1920, underscoring the physical danger Paul and Silas faced
- - The story of John Mark's abandonment of the first missionary journey is revisited as context for why Paul refused to bring him on the second trip, and why Timothy's willingness to submit stood in such contrast
- - The pastor shares the story of how the EC space at the church was formerly the largest-selling Goodwill boutique in the county, and how a moment of prayer on a scaffold led to the decision to leave it as an open fellowship space rather than divide it into classrooms
- - The account of Tom Patterson's offhand suggestion during a Tuesday morning walk-through is shared as an example of God speaking through an unexpected voice to redirect the church's building plans for the children's ministry courtyard



## Scripture

### **Explicitly Referenced:**

- Acts 15:41
- Acts 16:1-10
- 1 Corinthians 7:17-24
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### **Alluded To or Implied:**

- Acts 13 (John Mark departing the first missionary journey)
- Acts 15 (The Jerusalem Council and its letter regarding circumcision)
- 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 (Paul's reference to being caught up to the third heaven, alluded to in the discussion of Paul being stoned at Lystra)
- Acts 14:19-20 (Paul stoned and left for dead at Lystra)
- Philippians 2:20-22 (Paul's description of Timothy as like-minded, a true son in the faith)
- Matthew 11:28-30 (Jesus's invitation to all who are weary and heavy laden)

### **Thematically Present:**

- Romans 3:23-24 (salvation by grace, not works)
- Ephesians 2:8-9 (grace through faith, not of works)
- Romans 9:14-24 (God's sovereignty and man's free will)



## Quotes

I say all that to say that in hopes we may have a fresh appreciation for the effort Paul and Silas expended to fill the seats in our church today.

It isn't circumcision per se that's the issue. It's his willingness to submit to a greater cause than his own flesh simply for the sake of the gospel message being unhindered by what anyone may see in me.

His willingness to submit, that's what you look for in someone who is coming on your ministry team.

When God calls you to ministry, he also provides a vision for that ministry. If you sense God is calling you into any kind of ministry, and I'm not talking about standing behind a pulpit or anything like that. Ministry is, it just means you're serving people.

He told me something very wise. He said, God guides by your subjective likes and dislikes in many cases.

According to what Chuck Smith says, where God guides, God provides, that also works in the inverse, where God does not provide, God guides.

Everyone who chose of their own free will to place their faith in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation in Paul's first venture into Europe did so only because of God's sovereignty in redirecting Paul.

The fact that I'm standing here before you now is by God's sovereign arrangement. I just shared with you how it was that I arrived in this particular part of the country, and the thing that I can say as I stand here today is if you get saved, if you choose to place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, it will be because God sovereignly arranged it to be so that you would be here today to hear from a man who God sovereignly arranged to stand before you to present you the gospel that you may by your own choosing receive or deny.

Everything we've been talking about here today is a manifestation of the love of Christ for you. For you. It's all for you.

It comes all the way from Jesus himself through the Apostle Paul, through the ministry efforts of the Apostle Paul and so on and so forth, all those missionaries that have been out there in the world since Christ sharing the gospel, spreading the word, that it would come right down into your heart today.





## Discussion Questions

Paul and Silas traveled roughly 2,800 miles mostly on foot to spread the gospel -- what physical, emotional, or social sacrifices are you willing to make in your own sphere of ministry, and what does your answer reveal about how much you truly value the gospel?

Timothy submitted to circumcision not because it was required for salvation, but to remove any potential barrier to others hearing the gospel -- in what areas of your life might your personal freedoms, habits, or preferences be creating unnecessary obstacles for those you are trying to reach?

The sermon draws a parallel between Timothy's willingness to submit to Paul's leadership and the broader principle of submitting to the Holy Spirit -- how do you personally discern the difference between godly redirection and simply human pressure to conform?

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9 that he became all things to all people for the sake of the gospel, yet he refused to allow Titus to be circumcised under pressure from the Judaizers -- what distinguishes a wise, gospel-motivated compromise from a compromise that actually undermines the gospel message?

The Holy Spirit actively forbade Paul and Silas from preaching in certain regions, ultimately redirecting them toward Macedonia and Western Europe -- how do you respond when God closes a door that you were certain he had opened, and what practices help you remain open to his redirection?

The sermon suggests that God guided the pastor to Naples partly through his subjective likes and dislikes -- how much weight do you give to your own desires and inclinations when seeking God's direction, and how do you guard against confusing personal preference with divine leading?

Timothy's faithfulness to Paul lasted until Paul's final letter and his very last breath -- what does this kind of enduring, loyal ministry partnership look like in your own life, and what conditions make such relationships possible?

The sermon points out that everyone in the room with Western European heritage is a spiritual descendant of God's sovereign decision to redirect Paul toward Macedonia -- how does recognizing the long chain of sacrifice and obedience behind your own salvation change the way you think about your responsibility to pass the gospel on to others?

The sermon presents God's sovereignty and human free will working together in Paul's redirection and in the salvation of those who heard the gospel -- where do you find yourself struggling most with this tension in your own faith, and how does this passage help or challenge your understanding?

John Mark quit when faced with the difficult terrain of the first missionary journey, while Timothy willingly endured personal suffering to join the team -- what does your pattern of response to difficulty in ministry reveal about the condition of your heart toward God's call on your life?



## Small Group Guide

# Acts 16:1-10 | The Missionary Journey: Sacrifice, Submission, and Sovereignty

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### **BEFORE YOU MEET**

*Encourage group members to read Acts 16:1-10 and reflect on a time when God redirected their plans in an unexpected way.*

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### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

**1. The Cost of the Gospel Is Real** Paul and Silas traveled approximately 2,800 miles, mostly on foot, through mountainous and dangerous terrain to bring the gospel to people who had never heard it. Their sacrifice puts our own ministry efforts in perspective.

**2. Timothy's Submission Was His First Great Test** Timothy's willingness to be circumcised was not about the act itself. It was about whether he would yield his personal comfort and liberty for the sake of an unhindered gospel message. Submission to godly leadership, ultimately the leading of the Holy Spirit, was the deeper issue at stake.

**3. God's Sovereignty and Human Free Will Work Together** When the Holy Spirit closed the door to Asia, God sovereignly redirected Paul through a vision toward Macedonia, which was Western Europe. Paul immediately responded. The result was the gospel entering the Western world, which ultimately led to the salvation of countless generations, including those of Western European descent sitting in the room today.

**4. God Gives Vision Alongside Calling** When God calls someone into ministry, he also provides a vision that stirs and excites them for that work, even through its difficulties.

**5. Ministry Teams Are Assembled by God** Timothy joined the team in Lystra. Luke quietly joined in Troas. God adds the right people at the right time, often without fanfare.

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### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

#### **Opening Question (Ice Breaker)**

*Think about a long trip you have taken, whether by car, plane, or otherwise. What was the most physically demanding or uncomfortable part of it? How did you feel when you finally arrived?*

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#### **Section 1: The Cost of Ministry (Acts 16:1-5)**



1. *The pastor described the physical terrain Paul and Silas crossed, including the Cilician Gates, and noted that their journey covered roughly 2,800 miles, mostly on foot. How does understanding the physical cost of their mission change the way you read passages like this in the New Testament?*
  2. *Paul had been stoned and left for dead in Lystra on his first trip there, yet he returned. What does that tell you about his conviction regarding the gospel? What would it take for you to return to a place where you had been seriously harmed?*
  3. *The pastor noted that John Mark turned back when he faced the same mountains on the first missionary journey. Have you ever walked away from something God was calling you to because the difficulty ahead seemed too great? What did you learn from that experience?*
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## **Section 2: Timothy's Submission (Acts 16:3)**

4. *Paul himself wrote in 1 Corinthians 7 that circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Yet he asked Timothy to be circumcised for the sake of the gospel's reach. How do you reconcile those two things? What principle do you think Paul was operating from?*
  5. *The pastor drew a parallel to elders voluntarily abstaining from alcohol, certain movies, and other liberties so as not to stumble others. Can you think of a personal liberty you have in Christ that you might voluntarily set aside for the sake of someone else's faith? How does that feel to consider?*
  6. *The pastor said, "Timothy's willingness to submit to Paul's leadership was far more important than what he was willing to submit to." What does genuine submission to godly leadership look like in your own life? Where do you find it easiest, and where do you find it hardest?*
  7. *What do you think Timothy and Paul would have missed had Timothy refused? What does that suggest about the long-term consequences of the choices we make in moments of testing?*
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## **Section 3: God's Sovereignty and Redirection (Acts 16:6-10)**

8. *The Holy Spirit forbade Paul and Silas from preaching in Asia, which seems counterintuitive. Have you ever sensed God closing a door to ministry or service that seemed obviously good? How did you respond, and how did things unfold?*
9. *The pastor shared the story of how Calvary Chapel Naples came to exist through a series of redirections, from Destin to Panama City Beach to Naples. He noted that he had to reach a genuine point of willingness to go to Panama City Beach before God redirected him to Naples. Why do you think genuine willingness often seems to precede God's clearer direction?*
10. *The pastor made the observation that everyone in the room with Western European heritage is a spiritual descendant of God redirecting Paul toward Macedonia. How does it change your perspective on your own*



salvation to see it as part of a sovereign chain of events stretching back two thousand years?

11. Paul responded to the Macedonian vision immediately, according to verse 10. What tends to slow down your response when you sense God directing you toward something? What would it look like to respond more immediately?

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#### **Section 4: Building the Ministry Team (Acts 16:10)**

12. Luke slips into the narrative simply through a change in pronouns, from "they" to "we," with no formal introduction. What does that tell you about how God often adds people to ministry teams? Can you think of someone who quietly joined your life or your church community and turned out to be deeply significant?
13. The pastor noted that Jesus brought new ministry partners into Paul's life while Paul was already in motion serving the Lord. What does that suggest about the relationship between active obedience and God's provision of co-laborers?

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### **PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS**

#### **This Week, Choose One:**

- **Examine your liberty.** Identify one area where your personal freedom in Christ might be causing confusion or temptation for someone else in your life. Pray about whether God is calling you to voluntarily set that aside for a season.
  - **Practice immediate response.** When you sense the Holy Spirit prompting you toward something this week, whether it is a conversation, an act of service, or a change in direction, practice responding without delay and journal what happens.
  - **Trace your gospel heritage.** Spend some time this week reflecting on or researching how the gospel came to your family, your culture, or your community. Consider writing it down or sharing it with someone.
  - **Encourage someone on your ministry team.** Think of one person who serves alongside you in any capacity. Write them a note, send a message, or tell them in person what their partnership means to you and what you see God doing through them.
  - **Pray about a closed door.** If there is an area of your life where you sense God has closed a door, bring it to him in prayer this week. Ask him to show you whether he is redirecting you toward something you have not yet seen.
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## **CLOSING REFLECTION**

*The pastor closed the sermon with this observation: the fact that the gospel reached you is the result of God's sovereign arrangement working through the free choices of countless people across two thousand years of history. Paul's willingness to climb a mountain. Timothy's willingness to yield his flesh. Luke's willingness to join a team. A vision in the night. A man saying, come over and help us.*

*Close your group time by asking each member to answer this question in one or two sentences:*

***What is one thing from this passage that you want to carry with you into this week?***

*Then close in prayer, thanking God for the sovereign arrangements that brought each person in the room to faith, and asking for the same willingness Paul, Timothy, and Luke demonstrated to go wherever the Holy Spirit leads.*



## Daily Devotional

# 5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

**Based on Acts 16 and the Themes of Missionary Sacrifice, Submission, Redirection, and the Spread of the Gospel**

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## Day 1: The Cost of the Call

**Reading:** Acts 16:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**Devotional:** The gospel has never traveled cheaply. Paul and Silas crossed mountain passes on foot, faced robbers, endured persecution, and pressed on through terrain that would discourage even the most seasoned traveler. And yet they went. Before you were ever born, men and women paid an enormous physical and spiritual price so that the message of Jesus Christ could reach the part of the world your family came from. That price was paid willingly, joyfully, and without complaint. The question worth sitting with today is not what the gospel cost them. The question is what the gospel is worth to you now that you have received it.

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## Day 2: Submission as Strength

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Galatians 2:3-5; Acts 16:3

**Devotional:** Timothy's willingness to submit to something painful and seemingly unnecessary was not weakness. It was the first great test of his ministry character. Paul knew that the gospel message could not afford to be hindered by anything in the flesh of those who carried it. The issue was never the specific act of submission itself. The issue was whether Timothy loved the gospel more than he loved his own comfort and his own rights. Every person called to ministry will face a version of this test. The question God is asking is not whether you understand the doctrine. The question is whether you love the mission more than you love yourself.

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## Day 3: When God Closes the Door

**Reading:** Acts 16:6-8; Proverbs 16:9; Romans 8:28

**Devotional:** Paul wanted to go east. The Holy Spirit said no. It is a startling thing to consider that God would forbid the preaching of the gospel anywhere, and yet that is exactly what happened. God's sovereignty does not always align with our ministry strategy, our personal preferences, or even our most sincere and prayerful plans. Closed doors are not failures. They are redirections. The same God who closed the door to Asia was already preparing a



continent for the gospel. When a door closes in your life, resist the urge to force it open. Stand still long enough to ask God which direction he is pointing you toward instead.

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## Day 4: The Vision That Changes Everything

**Reading:** Acts 16:9-10; Habakkuk 2:2-3; Joel 2:28

**Devotional:** God did not simply close one door and leave Paul standing in the dark. He gave him a vision, a supernatural sight of a man pleading for help, and with that vision came both a direction and a reason. When God calls you into a particular area of ministry, he will stir something inside you that mere human ambition cannot manufacture. That stirring is not accidental. It is the hand of God exciting you toward a need that only he has already seen. Paul responded immediately. He did not deliberate, negotiate, or delay. When God makes his direction clear, the only appropriate response is the one Paul modeled here.

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## Day 5: Sovereignly Arranged for You

**Reading:** Acts 16:10; John 3:16; Romans 10:14-15

**Devotional:** Every link in the chain that brought the gospel to you was sovereignly arranged by God. Paul was redirected. Timothy submitted. Luke joined the team. Macedonia was reached. Western Europe was transformed. Centuries of missionaries carried the message forward. And by God's design, it arrived at the precise moment and place in your life where you were positioned to hear it and respond. Your presence anywhere the gospel is preached is not coincidence. God arranged it. What remains is your free will, your choice to receive or to turn away from what has been brought to you at such extraordinary cost. Receive it. It was always meant for you.

