

The Fusion of Ministry and Vocation

Acts 16:11-15, 40

vs. 12, Philippi -> Approx. 15K people
30% Roman Citizens
50% Free Greek
20% Slave
A Roman colony filled mostly with Greek inhabitants.

Leading city of the district of Macedonia - or - "a city of the first division".

Paul first visited the city in 49-51AD.

Acts 16:10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Paul meets Lydia (Acts 16:14-15)

- Lydia's heart is opened to the truthfulness of Jesus!
- She becomes the first believer in the area.
- She is the first follower of Jesus (Christian) in Europe. As well as her household.
- Her home becomes the first location of a gathering of believers (church) in Philippi.

10-12 years later, Paul's letter to the Philippians (Date written 60-62AD, most likely later in 62)

Acts 28:16, 30-31 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him. **30** He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, **31** proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Philippians 1:13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

4:22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

- Was the church still meeting in Lydia's home?
- Was the jailer present with his family serving and worshipping with other brothers and sisters?
- Was the young woman who had been set free delighting in her Jesus centered family?

2 observations are made from a natural reading of the text (Philippians and Acts 16).

1. Paul has a deep affection for the church in Philippi.
2. Women (from the beginning) are a vital part of the health and leadership in the Philippian church.

Philippians 1:1-2 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus:

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers (supervisors) and deacons (servants). **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*parenthesis CEB

Lydia is not mentioned by name in Paul's letter to the Philippians. However, if Lydia was still in the area she would certainly have been included as one of the overseers/supervisors.

vs. 13, Expected to find a place of prayer.

Brief observations

- Paul had heard of a regular meeting place for prayer.
- All women
- Lydia -> not Jewish, but a God fearer. She is either not married or a widow.
- Lydia was a business woman (dealer of purple cloth).

The Business of Purple

Purple was a highly valued color used in fabric.

Thyatira -> a city in western Asia Minor in the region of Lydia (the Lydian lady).

Types of purple dye

1. Murex purple
2. Madder purple (Turkey Red)

Divine meeting

- Lydia is taking steps to engage in prayer to a God she doesn't fully know or understand.
- Paul and Co. in Troas have prayed to a God they do know and understand, "Where do we go to speak about your good news?"

vs. 14, Just by chance, Lydia meets Paul and hears the gospel and responds.

vs. 15, But not just Lydia. Lydia and her whole household were baptized.

A woman of business with a heart and mind to serve the church in her vocation and along side her vocation.

vs. 15 *continued*, Stay here -> create a home base for ministry. I will share my resources to help accomplish kingdom endeavors.

- Lydia is a devoted follower of Jesus who is strong, capable, and resourced.
- Lydia is a female householder.

Householders -> (Paterfamilias) They were responsible for the care of family and relatives, slaves, and dependent laborers. There were allowances for women to be householders and it was legally permissible.

It was very natural for householders to become church leaders.

"The householder would naturally serve as the leader of the house church. That is, by the very sociology of things, it would never have occurred to them that a person from outside the household would come in and lead what was understood as simply an extension of the household. To put it plainly, the church is not likely to gather in a person's house unless the householder also functioned as its natural leader. Thus Lydia would have held the same role in the church in her house as she did as a master of the household." ~ Gordon Fee

Materfamilias - the mother of households.

We don't have all of the details concerning the history of Lydia's life.

We know that she was the kind of leader that people followed even when it came to faith.

Lydia was a good news person, a grace person, and a faith person (vs. 15).

- The gospel is beautifully blind to hierarchy and privileging people based on status (however you choose to categorize it).

Matthew 23:11-12 The greatest among you will be your servant. **12** Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Hospitality -> the means and the space.

vs. 40, The church is still gathering and engaging with one another in Lydia's home.

Two areas of personal application.

1. Kingdom leadership regardless of status (male or female).
2. Ability to be really good at your job and the ability to engage and serve your church family.

Questions:

Spend time this week celebrating with thanksgiving that the Holy Spirit wants to use you in this family.

#1

How are you engaged and serving the 2M family (your church)? What kingdom step is Jesus asking your to take? How is Jesus asking you to use your resources (time, money, home, spiritual gift) in real time?

If you don't know start praying and asking God to give you clarity.

#2

To what degree is your relationship with Jesus saturating your daily living? What might be God doing around you in order to give you experience and maturity for what is around the corner?

Have you used your vocation as an excuse to not engage more deeply in ministry? How might God want your vocation to be fused with ministry? Have I spent meaningful time evaluating my personal capacity and usage of my weekly time? How does breaking bread like Jesus (hospitality) factor in to what you discovered?

How do I adopt a value of invitation?