

Acts 16:13-34

Three Conversations

Image Church // Study Through Acts # 12

MPT: Paul and Silas journey to Philippi to share the message of Jesus. While they are there, they have uniquely different encounters with three people. God uses these encounters to further the message of Jesus.

MPS: Three conversations, three people pointed to Jesus.

Introduction

Well, welcome back to Image Church- if you're a guest with us we're so glad that you're here with us tonight!

I also want to welcome back those of you who came last week and are joining us again this week! We had a great time at our second preview service! That's 2 preview services down and 4 to go.

Again, our goal is to use these preview weekends as **specific** opportunities to invite people to come check us out- we want them **to come and see and then come and stay** and be part of Image Church weekly gatherings and Community Groups!

Now, that **doesn't** mean don't invite people every week- defiantly invite people every week!! But doing preview services, and using that language helps us generate interest among people who are disconnected from church, it also helps us leverage the fact that we are a new church start-up- that's attractive- we have one change to be new we want to leverage that!

OK, well tonight, we're going to continue our series through the book of Acts—I actually have some sad news—*maybe good news for some of you*— Next week will be the **last** week in our series through the book of Acts.

After next week, we will be starting a **NEW** series called “**Upside Down**” where we'll be examining how Christianity's not what you would think it is- and certainly not what our culture would expect it to be.

*We'll look at how Jesus came and literally turned everything “upside down” from the *societal status-quo* when it comes to money, success, who Jesus actually is, the way to get to God, and culture.

This will be an awesome series to invite people to as we examine Christianly together! Get excited and be ready to invite because this series will lead us right up to launch Sunday on January 21st!

Well if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to Acts 16

We have been watching as God continues to expand what would become the largest movement to ever happen in history, and He does it through normal blue-collar men and women- by the power of the Holy Spirit.

What we've seen is a “*new community*” forming around the message and ministry of Jesus, and this “new community” is gaining traction as more people believe and together this group of people is living differently in response to the gospel.

Luke, the author of Acts stops along the way and shares stories like the ones that we will be looking at today so that you and I can learn from them and so that we can see specific ways that the church is growing. He does this to remind the readers, us, that God can accomplish these same things in and through us if we trust Him.

Let's take a look at Acts 16 where we'll see 3 different conversations with 3 very different people.

- *What we will see is that these stories are intentionally in Scripture to point us to 3 different applications! So we are going to walk through each conversation together...*

Acts 16:13-34

Paul and Silas had just arrived in the city of Philippi – this was a city that practiced the worship of many gods – so it was a pretty dark place... let's jump in at verse 13...

13 On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate by the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and spoke to the women gathered there. **14** A God-fearing woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying.

Write this down:

Conversation #1: Lydia

Lydia was a female merchant who sold purple cloth. What she sells — *purple cloth*—is marketed to wealthy people. So most likely Lydia is a pretty well put together person that does good finically and is known around the city.

She's also a Gentile (*she's not Jewish*) but for whatever reason had been attracted to Judaism- it says that she was a "God –fearing woman" ...

- In the **original language** that phrase means that "*she showed reverence for God and performed actions and rituals associated with the worship of God*" ... It's important to see that she was **religious** but she was not a Christ-follower.

See, she mentally ascended to the that fact that there was a God— she even did things for God—but she had never surrendered to what God had done for her through Jesus... For her is was a religion...

Here's the deal, being a Christian is more than just believing in God- or acknowledging that He exists... Our society is full of people who are just like Lydia. They show reverence for God, they talk about Him as a higher power, they might go to church, or give God credit for good things that happen, cross their chest after a homerun, and maybe they even throw up a prayer every once and a while when things get tight.

You know where you see this the most?!? **Country music!** Now I love Country music, but goodness, they just can't figure it out... *They don't know if they want to go skinny dipping or go church... I mean they don't know if they want to talk to God or talk about the girl with the tight jeans on...* they just can't figure it out...

And the rap game is just as bad... I am not promoting this, and I don't recommend that you listen to it, but I want to drive this point home: *Birdman* had a huge hit Album that was at one time **#1** on the charts called "*Like Father Like Son*" featuring *Lil Wayne*...

One of the featured songs on the album was called "***You Ain't Know***" Where *Lil Wayne* starts off by saying:

*I got a lot of loot and I ain't lookin' for a lady
And you can never play me
I'm from Uptown baby
I wake up in the mornin' [use the restroom] and wash my hands
Take a knee and thank the Man then get back to the money...*

And it all goes downhill from there...

Bet you never thought that you would hear Lil Wayne quoted in a Sermon... But you get the point...

We live in a culture where the assumption is to just give God the "head nod," acknowledge He's there and that's enough...

The problem is that's not what the Bible teaches, and it minimizes the very nature of who God is!

- **James 2:19 says:** ¹⁹ *You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder. (we will see this later)*

You believe in God?! Great! But you need to know who He is— He is the **creator** of the World, He's **all powerful, all knowing and all present**, He's **eternal**- the **beginning** and the **end**, He's **perfect**, He's **righteous** and He's **Holy**—And He radiates with so much glory that even one glance would wipe you off the face of the earth...

And there is no way you can ever stand in His presence because of your sin... **[pause]** and there lies the problem- sin... See, Knowledge **of** God doesn't give you access **to** God because you stand condemned in your sin.

And yet, the thing that continues to amaze me, is that in light of who I am, compared to who God is, he made a way for things to be made right. And that was by sending His Son—**Jesus**— to live perfectly in my place and die in my place— accomplishing everything necessary for me to be saved, so that by believing in His finished work I can have access to God!

- **Acts 4:12** says: [This Jesus] *There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.*
- **Romans 10:9**: *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*
- **John 14:6**: Jesus Himself says: *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

This is the news that Lydia needed to hear- **And it is the news that some of you need to hear.** She needed to know, and some of you need to know, that showing reverence for God isn't enough! She had to understand who God was and what He offered her through Jesus!

See, Lydia was *spiritually interested*, but on this day, she became *spiritually renewed* by the message of Jesus... some of you need the same thing- you have always believed **in** God but you have never surrender to what he has offered you in Jesus

You want to know what's the interesting part about Lydia's situations is?

- Where it all happened... it wasn't in a church, it was in a small "*community group*" that got together every week! Even though she wasn't a Christ-follower, she was open to spending time with some folks in a community group...

We want our community groups to be a place where Spiritually interested people can come! That's why we have set them up the way that we have! (B/S – 2 times a month and MH 1 a month)

- There are some people that you know who are **spiritually interested** that would be more than willing to come to your community group- you just need to invite them!
 - Someone invited Lydia to be part of this group- you need to do the same!
- *We want Community groups to be the front door not the back door!*

If we want to be the church in this city it starts by living as the church during the week looking to engage and invite the Lydia's.

- Here is the thing, people will say yes!!

I want to show you one thing that I love before we move on to the next conversation... it says in the text that **the Lord opened her heart...**

- This takes the pressure off of us, but it doesn't take away our intentionality... Only God saves, but God has told us to "**GO**" and in that, that He will use us through the Power of the Holy Spirit...

And then look what happens:

15 After she and her household were **baptized**, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

- She and her whole house were saved!... You never know how God can use intentionality with one person to reach many...

Then her first response is Baptism, we have seen this a lot, and her second response is to have them into her home. And ironically her home would turn into a hub for the church! This is a model we have seen all through Acts—people in homes together!!

Ok let's look at the 2nd conversation:

Conversation #2 the slave Girl:

16 Once, as we were on our way to prayer, a slave girl met us who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She made a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling. **17** As she followed Paul and us she cried out, "These men, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation, are the servants of the Most High God." **18** She did this for many days. Paul was greatly annoyed. Turning to the spirit, he said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out right away.

So, this girl was most likely a teenager who was enslaved- making money for several men through fortune telling because she was possessed by a demon...

She comes across Paul and Silas and she goes into fortune telling mode declaring: "These men, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation, are the servants of the Most High God."

There are a couple things we need to see here:

- The demons acknowledge who God is... [I told you we would see this] ... what they say is true- but they certainly have not submitted to the Lordship of Jesus!
- Paul specifically performs this *exorcism* in **JESUS NAME**- it's Jesus' authority that's at work here!
 - This points to the fact that Jesus has divine power over the dominion of darkness!
 - This makes known that the God Paul proclaims is specifically tied to the divine work through Jesus.¹
 - In a city that promotes many god's- Paul is pointing to the one true God and the finished work of Jesus!

You're like "Man this is awesome, but unfortunately I don't have the gift of exorcism!?! Not to mention I can't recall the last time I saw someone possessed??"

I feel you on that... you may not be able to yank demons out of people but you know what you do have the power to do?

- **Declare the power of Jesus to people who are in bondage...**

Listen there are so many people around you who are in bondage to so many ways:

- There are people who are being oppressed, people that are marginalized, there are people struggling with addiction, poverty stricken...

Are we willing to engage those people with the hope and power of Jesus?

- There are people in our city who desperately need to be pointed to hope... they need to hear the power of Jesus name!

*This girl was able to experience the liberating power of God's grace through the name of Jesus...

- There are some of you tonight **that need to remember the liberating power of Jesus name**- that in Him you have hope and freedom no matter what your experiencing...
- I cannot promise that your situation will get better, but what I can promise you is that there is hope beyond what your experiencing and a God that loves you!

There are others of us here that need to be reminded that we need to be **aware** of the bondage around us and **intentional** to engage with it.

- What would it look like if our community groups were engaging with people that were oppressed and marginalized? If we were in relationships with people who were in bondage!

¹ Bock, D. L. (2007). [Acts](#) (p. 537). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

There may or may not be freedom from circumstances but there is hope for the hopeless in Jesus name!

- And just maybe the circumstantial change *might* come through the vehicle of the church as we engage with those that need to hear the hope of the gospel!

Let's keep working through the text:

As you can imagine the owners of this girl were not happy about what just happened- they are ticked, so they report them to the “police.” The crowd jumps in on ridiculing Paul and Silas, so they’re arrested, beaten and thrown in prison and under watch of the Jailer.

Pick up in verse 25:

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. [this is amazing me- midnight after they were beaten] **26** Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the jail were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains came loose. **27** When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison standing open, he drew his sword and was going to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped. [his life was at stake- prisoners get out and he will be killed]

28 But Paul called out in a loud voice, “Don’t harm yourself, because we’re all here!”

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. **30** He escorted them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” **32** And they spoke the word of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house. **33** He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized. **34** He brought them into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had come to believe in God with his entire household.

Conversation #3: The Jailer

I don’t know if you’re picking up on this but there is a common theme of people being put in jail and God getting them out... even the most secure prisons are no match for God...

I think this is just further emphasis that even in man’s best efforts to stop God are useless... the message of the Jesus cannot be stopped!

This should be encouraging to us that no matter what happens in our government, or what happen in our culture God cannot be stopped and the message of Jesus cannot be silenced!

So, Paul and Silas are in Jail and God opens all the doors...

One pastor says: *The real miracle in this story may not have been the earthquake, but in Paul and Silas’ refusal to run. This is what so impressed the jailor and sealed his decision to listen to their message!*²

See, the jailer had to have been listening as Paul and Silas were praising God as they sat in their jail cell... and then when the earthquake happened it sealed the deal for the jailer, he knew he had to know this God they were singing about!

It is important to realize that the outside world is always watching how we handle things, particularly suffering...

- Listen, ***you never know when your suffering will lead to someone else’s salvation!***

We talked about at the beginning with Lydia that there are a lot of people give God the head nod, and acknowledge that He’s there- well often times these same people in suffering abandon God or shake their fist at Him...

² Pastor JD Greear: Comments on Acts 16

See, it's how we praise Him when times are hard that really shows where our belief lies...

Something else that we need to see- the jailor was probably one of the ones who beat them. **Paul literally had to choose between his freedom and this man's soul** who had beat the tar out of him...

- *If I were Paul, I'd probably have said in answer to the question "what must I do..." "I'll tell you but you've got to let us go first, and then we'll mail you a letter back from the next town."*

Paul chooses this man's soul... and he address the jailers question: "what must I do to be saved" *Isn't it interesting that the jailers assumption is that he has to "do" something to be saved??*

That is a great example of the natural position of our hearts- we think we have to do something to make ourselves right before God... But Paul answers him with the truth of the gospel- **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"**

- There was nothing for him to do, it had all already been done through the finished work of Jesus...

****Some of you need to hear that tonight, you need to stop assuming you have to do something for God to love you and you need to rest in the love he is offering you in Jesus!! All that to change you and stop trying to change yourself!**

See the gospel changes everything, look at what happened here, one scholar says it like this:

Now that they are no longer in prison, God has brought about a different kind of connection between them. Those who were enemies and separated are immediately brought together.

Thus the scene also illustrates the reconciliation that the gospel brings at the human level. It shows faith through the reception of the word about Jesus, leading to baptism and joy followed by the service of meeting the needs of others in care and hospitality. To know God means that others are treated with care.³

This is a beautiful picture of what the gospel can do in even the most hostile of situations... We want to see the gospel do this in the city of Atlanta! We want to see unity where there was division, we want the way we praise God in the storm to be held up to point people to the hope in Christ!

Conclusion

3 conversations and **one** central theme **Jesus!!**

- Some of you need to respond to Him tonight eith for the first time or you need to reorient your heart toward Him... Do that!

What we have seen is a picture of Paul and Silas living intentionally on mission leveraging their lives and their circumstances to point people to Jesus!

Is that true for us?? Are we living intentionally looking for chances to point people to Jesus?

You know something else we see from these conversations?

- There were few people more diverse ethnically, socially, psychologically, and culturally than Lydia, the girl, and the jailer, and yet Paul engaged them all with a gospel intended for all.⁴

³ Bock, D. L. (2007). [Acts](#) (p. 543). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁴ Bock, D. L. (2007). [Acts](#) (p. 546). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Listen Paul was intentional to engage with people who looked different! In these conversations alone, he literally broke down every social norm that existed then...

If the gospel is for all people, it means that we cannot just engage with the same people... we need to be perusing relationships with people who are different for the sake of the gospel and for the beauty of gospel unity!!

Are we doing that??? The thing is where we are all you have to do is look around you, there is an incredible amount of diversity in Atlanta!

Listen at the end of the day we want to be a church that is constantly living on mission together looking for ways to point people to Jesus!

Pastor JD Greear says this when it comes to sharing the gospel: *You can speak at the wrong time, but more than likely you just will not speak.*

Here is the deal, If we sow sparingly we will reap sparingly! We do not want to look back in 2 years and it be the same people in here- we don't want to be a church full of comfortable Christians- we want to be an army that mobilized for the Kingdom of God!!

Charles Spurgeon says: *"We are not responsible to God for the soul that are saved, but we are responsible for the Gospel that is preached, and for the way in which we preach it."*

Let me pray for us...