

ACTS 16 PART I

This Doesn't Make ANY Sense!

*3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces [a]perseverance; 4 and perseverance, [b]character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
Romans 5:3-5*

Digging Deeper

Two major themes are present here in Acts 16 and neither of them makes any sense, humanly speaking that is. The first is a major conflict that ended up splitting ministry partners in opposite directions and the second is a circumcision of a grown man just after the council agreed that circumcision was not required for salvation. Unless we are led by the Spirit we can't easily connect the dots. But as we dig in we need to first understand that conflict is ok.

Conflict is the friction that sharpens the blade. Many times God uses tension or friction to shift our focus to the direction in which he wants us to go. Just ask Jonah! In relationships, conflicts (when handled properly) can help us grow stronger together, but in ministry, the stakes somehow seem higher. However, in ministry, the same rules apply. If members of the body disagree on something it can still be used to evaluate God's truth, evaluate our understanding of scripture, and seek the spirit in the way we should go. As we wrestle with Acts 16, we should evaluate ourselves, how we relate to God's word and other people, and how easily we adapt to the spirit's will. God's word has a unique ability to shape us, mold us, and transform us closer to the image of Christ every day. We may make our plans, but are we letting the Lord lead our steps? As Psalm 139 tells us:

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties;
24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Are we truly willing to wrestle with ourselves to discover and embrace God's truth?

Read Acts 16:1-15 and 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 together. Discuss how they might relate to one another.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your initial reaction to conflict? (Relationships, Church or Ministry, General Public)
2. Paul and Barnabus 'Sharply' Disagreed and parted ways. Even after they parted ways, we still see Paul speak highly of him in scripture. How do we speak of those whom we have tension with?
3. In Acts 16 Paul had Timothy circumcised, Not for his salvation, but for his future ability to minister to others from within the Jewish faith. How has God used your pain to enhance your ability to minister to others?
4. In what ways do you 'Become all things to all men in order to reach others'?
5. When striving to be 'Led by the Spirit' How do we discern which way the Lord would have us go? Why is this vital to the decision-making process of the believer?