

# Forgotten Lives

## Lydia

Acts 16:13-15

June 14, 2026 am

HDBC

Continuing our series ***Forgotten Lives*** which examines some of the lesser-known characters in the Bible. Some are great heroes who are to be remembered for their positive contributions to the Kingdom of God. Others are actually villains whose actions we should avoid. This morning we want to consider **a lady whose positive legacy is worthy of our attention**. I'm speaking of Lydia and her story is found in Acts 16.

This account happened during **Paul's second missionary journey**. He and Silas made their way back through the cities where churches had been planted during his first missionary journey, then expanded to include additional cities. One of those cities was Philippi.

While they were there they attended a prayer meeting on the Sabbath day near the river. It was there that **Paul met Lydia**, and it was there that **Lydia met Jesus**. Those two meetings not only changed her life but the life of her family. Because of how she was saved and what she did after being saved, she will live forever in the minds and hearts of believers of every future generation. Let's **read the text** and then I want to point out three things that are revealed through her experience and life. **Read Acts 16:13-15**

What her story reveals about life.

What her story reveals about God.

What her story reveals about following Jesus.

### 1. What Lydia's story reveals about life

Like all believers in every generation since the time of Jesus **Lydia had a life before coming to faith in Jesus** and then **a life after coming to faith in Jesus**. In other words, she was a normal person much like many of us in this room. Because of this her story reveals some important things that are common to life. Specifically two principles or truths.

## 1) **Success without Jesus leaves you unsatisfied.**

Lydia was a successful businesswoman who was a **seller of purple fabrics**. In those days purple was the color of royalty. Only the upper-class people could afford to purchase and wear it. It was expensive to make and therefore expensive to own. The dye used in purple garments was taken from **the throat of a shellfish**. One shellfish would give you one drop of dye. If you saw someone wearing that color you knew they were wealthy. And Lydia sold to that clientele. **She did not manage a Dollar General or Walmart.**

She was a career businesswoman who had become very successful at a time and in a culture where it was very **difficult to do so as a woman**. Yet, she had done it. She would have been invited to the **best dinner parties**. She would have had the **ear of politicians**. With her wealth came position and power. But she was not satisfied.

As she sat there down by the riverside and listened to Paul talk about Jesus and how Jesus can satisfy every hunger and quench every thirst, she realized her riches were not satisfying.

**Riches cannot buy happiness in the heart.**

**Money cannot buy peace in your soul!**

**Wealth cannot buy security for eternity!**

**Success cannot fill the deep need in the human heart.**

Lydia instinctively knew that her success in business and in money had not and could not satisfy the deepest longings of her heart. It could not then and it cannot now. She also learned that . . .

## 2) **Religion without Jesus leaves you unsaved.**

Lydia was a religious person. She was willing to attend a prayer meeting for a reason. We learn that she had come from **Thyatira, which was in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey**. We know from the book of Revelation that a church was there. Was it there before she came to Philippi? Or did she later return home and help plant that

church? We don't know. But even before she was saved she had an awareness of God and worshipped Him. But she did not have a personal relationship with Him.

**Perhaps you know about God, too.** You may even have a respect for God. And like Lydia, you may be a religious person. You may pray like Lydia prayed. You can have all the religion in the world and trust it to make you right with God but **it will leave you unsaved.**

I'm listening to biography of John Newton, writer of **Amazing Grace**. As a child he was given spiritual instruction by his mother. After she died he often remembered it and at times believed in God, prayed to God, thought about God. But was never at peace until he had a personal encounter with God that resulted in his salvation.

If you had walked up to Lydia before that day in Philippi and asked, **Lydia .. are you going to go to Heaven when you die?** I'm sure that religious Lydia would have said, **I hope so .. I'm doing the best that I can ... I think I'm saved.**

Religion cannot give you what you really need in your life. Church membership cannot give you what you really need. It's wonderful to join the church. In fact you ought to join a local church but joining a church is not going to get you to Heaven?

**Martin Luther was uber-religious, but was miserable. He tried all the religious mechanisms of his day but none gave him peace with God. Then, after reading the book of Romans he came to understand that salvation came by grace alone and through faith alone in Christ alone.** Good works will not make you right with God.

Lydia's story reminds us that . . .

Wealth and success with salvation leaves you unsatisfied.

Religion without Jesus leaves you unsaved.

## 2. What Lydia's story reveals about God

This is Lydia's story, but more importantly it is God's story. Even though Lydia clearly had a longing for God, it is also clear that God was lovingly pursuing her. Think with me about two things God did for her and that He still does for people today.

### 1) He providentially works to reveal the gospel to seekers.

The providence of God is a wonderful thing. God, working and weaving His will into our lives without violating our freedoms. Always watching and working even when we can't see Him.

Elmer Bendiner described a bombing run over Germany during WWII. Our B-17 was barraged by flak from Nazi antiaircraft guns. That was not unusual, but on this particular occasion our gas tanks were hit. Later, as I reflected on the miracle of a twenty-millimeter shell piercing the fuel tank without touching off an explosion, our pilot, Bohn Fawkes, told me it was not quite that simple. On the morning following the raid, Bohn had gone down to ask our crew chief for that shell as a souvenir of unbelievable luck.

The crew chief told Bohn that not just one shell but eleven had been found in the gas tanks--all unexploded. He was told that the shells had been sent to be defused. Apparently when they were opened, they found no explosive charge. They were clean as a whistle and just as harmless. Empty, but not all of them.

One contained a carefully rolled piece of paper. On it was a scrawl in Czech language. The Intelligence people scoured our base for a man who could read Czech. Eventually, they found one to decipher the note. It read: ***This is all we can do for you now. POWs***

We see the providence of God while looking back to see how He did things to put us in position to experience His best. Almost impossible to see in it in the present, but easy when looking back.

My dad lost his job in Tallassee, AL in 1973. **A few years earlier Jan's dad lost his job in Camden, AR. Each of those events led to our families moving to Monroe. We ended up in same church. We met, fell in love and married.** Providential work of God!

This is best seen in God working to bring lost people, and especially seekers to a place to hear the gospel. Think about how God orchestrated the events that led to Lydia's conversion. Called Paul to missions in that region. Led him to Philippi and ultimately to a prayer meeting. **In Acts 16:6 the Holy Spirit would not let Paul stay in Asia to share the Gospel. Seems strange. Why would God do that?** One answer is that Paul had an important appointment at a small prayer meeting by the river Philippi. Don't miss that!

At the same time he led Lydia to that same prayer meeting. The Bible is clear that God is providentially working in our lives to accomplish His will. Sometimes the things happening to us seem so random, yet God is working. Yet, when we look back it is easy to see how the Lord used them to get us where He wanted us.

**Jan's cousin, Joey. Teenager coming to visit Randy. Went to youth retreat a got saved. Years later shared with Jan that it changed his life. That was the providential work of God.**

## **2) He opens the hearts of those ready to be saved.**

Not only does God providentially work to bring the Gospel to seekers, He also opens the hearts of those ready to be saved. Notice the text. **And the Lord opened her heart.** Paul couldn't open her heart any more than I can open your heart today! But I want you to know that God can open your heart just as He opened her heart that day down by the river!

## **3. What Lydia's story reveals about following Jesus.**

Lydia was born again that day. But that's not the last time we see her. I want you to notice what she did next and what we learn from it.

## 1) Following Jesus calls for an open declaration.

Now look at verse 15, *And when she and her household were baptized.* She was baptized. She understood that God never calls anyone to private discipleship. He calls us to openly and boldly proclaim our faith in Jesus. Lydia was willing to do so. But notice that she was not the only one to be baptized.

The first thing she did was to go find her family! She had met Jesus and wanted her family to know Jesus! When the Bible says that Lydia and her household was baptized that means that Lydia went and shared Jesus with them that they placed faith in Jesus.

Why did they all get baptized? They got baptized because baptism identified them publicly with Jesus Christ. That's why you ought to be baptized if you've received Jesus Christ into your life! It is your initial way of declaring to the world *I have decided to follow Jesus.*

## 2) Following Jesus involves courageous service.

She was saved in verse 14 and she immediately began to serve in verse 15. I don't know if she had the spiritual gift of hospitality or if she even knew what spiritual gifts were. But I know this, she saw a need and immediately stepped in to meet that need. She invited Paul & his companions to stay in her home. In fact, the text says *she prevailed upon us.* She would not take **no** for an answer. I love this.

Remember that this was a courageous act. Not everyone thought Paul was a good guy. There were some who were out to get Paul. In fact later in this same chapter we find Paul and Silas being imprisoned in this very city.

One final mention of this hero of the faith. *Verse 40 tells us that after Paul and Silas were released from prison they entered the house of Lydia and greeted the brothers and sisters in Christ.* What does this tell us?

Paul and Silas had been there long enough to establish a church.

**That young church met in the house of Lydia.**

That's courageous service!

**Lydia may be someone** who is ***Forgotten***, overshadowed by Paul and Silas, but her reward in Heaven will be great. She may be little-known by men and women on this earth, but she is well-known in Heaven.

Are you like Lydia, success but unsatisfied,

Are you like Lydia, religious but unsaved?

God has the solution and is providential working to give you an opportunity to respond to His offer of salvation.

Are you like Lydia, you've been saved and are ready to take the next steps, baptism and service? We will help you, but you must take the first step.