



First Baptist Church Selmer

THE ROAD TO ROMANS • PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY •
ACTS 16:1-10, 25-40; 17:16-34 • 2/1/2026

MAIN POINT

Whether at home, work, school, or around the world, God has called every believer to be on mission.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Do you find it easier to discuss spiritual things with people you know or with strangers? Why do you think this is?

Of the resources we have—time, talent, and treasure—which do you most often employ for sharing the gospel? Which do you least often employ? Why do you gravitate toward one over the others?

According to Acts 13–15, Paul's 1st Missionary Journey had been a success. Many people received Christ's gift of salvation, and churches started in several places throughout the area where he and Barnabas traveled. In Acts 16, Paul and Barnabas had parted ways, and Paul was soon joined by Silas, and later Timothy, on his 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 16–18:22). **See also Appendix C.**

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 16:1-10.

1 "Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' 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." (ESV)

What do we learn about Timothy in 16:1-2? Why do these characteristics make him the perfect missionary companion for Paul and Silas?

Timothy was a second-generation Christian—his mother was a believer, but his father was a Gentile. This made Timothy not only a seasoned believer, but also someone who had a connection to both the Jewish and Gentile people they would come in contact with. Timothy was also spoken highly of by fellow Christians.

How do you think Paul might have felt after twice being prevented by the Holy Spirit from carrying out his intentions (vv. 6-7)?

Have you ever been frustrated by the Holy Spirit's leading because it seemed to contradict your plans?

Twice, the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from taking the gospel to the regions of western Asia and along the Black Sea. Instead, He led Paul to the town of Troas. Paul knew God had some purpose for bringing him to Troas, but he had no idea what it was. Then, in the middle of the night, Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man calling for him to come help them. From that vision, Paul was directed to a new ministry in Macedonia (16:6-10).

What does Paul and his companions' response to the Macedonian man's request clarify about their ministry's purpose?

Paul and his fellow missionaries' quick response to the Holy Spirit's leading reveals they felt compelled to share the gospel wherever and whenever God called them to do so. The vision occurred one night; they departed the next day and traveled to Philippi. Paul was able to locate a place of prayer beside a river outside the city gate where a group of women met on the Sabbath. One of them was named Lydia (16:14), who was saved that day and would later minister through her gift of hospitality to the missionaries as a gathering place for Christians in her city (16:40).

After the healing of a slave girl with a spirit of divination in Acts 16:16-24, Paul and Silas were arrested in Philippi for causing a disturbance in the city. But prison itself couldn't stop these missionaries from sharing the Gospel with others.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 16:25-40.

25 "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 26 and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. 27 When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' 29 And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' 31 And 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 and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. 34 Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

35 But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, 'Let those men go.' 36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, 'The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace.' 37 But Paul said to them, 'They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.' 38 The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. 39 So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. 40 So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed." (ESV)

What indications of the jailer's fear do you see? Why did the jailer's mood change after Paul's statement in verse 28?

What did Paul understand the jailer to mean by his question in verse 30?

What are evidences that the jailer's faith in the Lord was genuine?

The earthquake probably aroused the jailer from sleep. Looking around, he assumed every prisoner had escaped because all the prison doors stood open. Responsible for what happened, he knew he had no other choice but to take his own life. Otherwise, he would be executed. That's when Paul and Silas came to the jailer's rescue. They convinced him that none of the prisoners had escaped, and they shared Christ with him.

When you face overwhelming times in your life, how do you generally respond?

How can Paul and Silas' example change your perspective?

Paul and Silas were open to God's use of their difficult circumstances to bring about good. Instead of letting fear hush their testimony of Jesus, they turned their prison cell into a worship center. Luke said they sang hymns or songs of praise directed to God.

How does the manner in which we respond to crises give opportunities for Christian witness? How can it negate our Christian witness?

We pick back up on another encounter on the missionary journey when Paul is moved by the abundance of misdirected religious worship he finds in Athens.

| HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 17:16-34.

16 "Now, while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. 18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, 'What does this babbler wish to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities'—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.' 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: "To the unknown god." What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for

"In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'

29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.'

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, 'We will hear you again about this.' 33 So Paul went out from their midst. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them." (ESV)

Why was Paul's heart disturbed by the cultural climate of Athens (v. 16)?

Athens was full of idols, and the people were completely given over to idol worship. More than 30,000 statues were erected to their gods. Luke wrote that Paul's "spirit was provoked," which denotes fury and sadness, a deep grief over the idolatry. The pagan idol worship offended his moral conscience.

Why might Paul have gone to both the synagogue and the marketplace to share the gospel? What is the benefit of meeting people "where they are" for the sake of evangelism?

What truths did Paul communicate about the character of God (vv. 24-31)?

What pattern did Paul set for us as we share the gospel?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why do opportunities to share the gospel sometimes go unrecognized? Why are opportunities sometimes rejected?

How are you going to be more aware of these opportunities?

Who is one person God is calling you to reach out to this week?

PRAYER

Pray that you will take advantage of opportunities to witness to the people God places in your life.

COMMENTARY

ACTS 16:1-10; 25-40

16:1-5 Revisiting his former mission field, Paul met Timothy at Lystra. He is described as a *“disciple,”* which indicates that he was probably a convert from Paul’s earlier work there. Paul wanted to take him on the mission. Timothy had a Jewish mother, which made him legally a Jew, but he had not been circumcised. Paul had him circumcised so as to give no offense in the synagogues where he witnessed. He shared the Jerusalem letter with all the churches of his first missionary journey.

16:6-10 Paul’s group left the area of Paul’s first mission and started north (through central Turkey). Paul would have turned west into the province of Asia over to the coast, where the populous city of Ephesus was located. The Spirit prevented this. So Paul continued north, this time headed for the province of Bithynia with its towns along the coast of the Black Sea. Again, Paul was prevented by the Spirit (v. 7). He finally ended up on the Aegean coast at Troas, and there he discovered where he was being led. In a vision at Troas, a Macedonian man begged him to come minister in Macedonia. Macedonia was not far geographically, a couple of days by sea. Ethnically, it was a different world—the land of Alexander the Great, the Greek world. Here for the first time, Luke used the first person plural. His “we” perhaps indicates that he first joined Paul at Troas.

16:25–34 Like the apostles before them (5:17–21), Paul and Silas were miraculously delivered from their confinement by an earthquake in the night. Also, like the apostles, they did not flee, but remained at the scene to bear witness. The jailer expected to lose his life for the loss of the prisoners. Instead, he gained life, true life in Christ, through the witness of Paul and Silas. They witnessed to all his household. All were baptized. Joy filled their home.

16:35–40 The next day, realizing that Paul and Silas had committed no real offense, the town magistrates sent orders to the jailer to release them. Paul would not go. He divulged his Roman citizenship and noted that he and Silas had been scourged without a hearing, which was strictly forbidden for Roman citizens. He demanded that the magistrates come with a personal apology and escort them out. Paul realized this was an important precedent. Preaching the gospel was not an offense. He had broken no laws. He wanted the record set straight—not just in Philippi but wherever he witnessed.

ACTS 17:16-34

17:16–21 By Paul’s day, Athens had lost its political and economic power. It was still the intellectual and cultural center for all of Greece. The remnants of its former grandeur were everywhere, particularly its many statues. Paul was offended by the idols of the Greek gods, which were to be seen on all sides. They would soon become the subject matter for his sermon. He witnessed to the Jews on the Sabbath in the synagogue, but every day he engaged the Greek philosophers in the marketplace, particularly the Epicureans and the Stoics, the two leading Athenian schools of thought.

Paul’s message was strange to them. They thought he was proclaiming new gods—Jesus and the “goddess Resurrection.” They called him a “*babbler*” (literally, a “seed-picker,” someone pecking after any new idea). In reality, Luke said, they were the seed-pickers, always looking for the latest. They led Paul to the Areopagus. This could either refer to the venerable Athenian court of that name or to the hill at the foot of the Acropolis where the court had formerly met.

17:22–31 Paul’s speech on the Areopagus is a masterpiece of missionary preaching. Paul sought to establish as much rapport with the Greek philosophers as possible without compromising the gospel. He began with an attention getter, pointing to an idol he had seen in the marketplace as “*the unknown god*.” The Greeks had perhaps erected it in case they might have left a god out whom they would not want to offend. In any event, the God they did not know was the only real God, and Paul now proceeded to present Him. He

pictured Him as the God who made all things, the providential God who sets all boundaries of time and space. The philosophers could easily follow this, particularly the Stoics. They would especially agree that "*we are his offspring*," where Paul actually quoted a Stoic poet.

But in verse 29, Paul began to attack the Greek culture more directly. If we are born in God's image, he said, then we are wrong when we make idols. Idolatry gets things backward; it makes God into man's image. God will no longer tolerate such ignorance, Paul continued. He is coming to judge us for our ignorance and idolatry, to judge us by a person whom He raised from the dead (vv. 31-32). Paul lost most of his Athenian intellectuals right there. The idea of a man rising from the dead was sheer folly to their thinking.

17:32-34 There were three responses to Paul's address. Many mocked him. Others wanted to hear him further. A few believed: the sermon was not a failure. Paul knew that one could go only so far in accommodating the gospel. One cannot avoid the very center of the gospel, the folly of the cross.