



Acts 16:1-40 - Jesus: Accepted or Rejected

Personal Preparation 1 - The Word Travels to Philippi

In Acts 16 we see that Paul is on the move. But it's not to get the scenic tour. He's travelling so that he can spread the good news of Jesus. The events of this chapter and the next are commonly referred to as 'Paul's 2nd missionary journey'. The first trip was Acts 13-14. **Read Acts 16:1-40** – but as you do, trace the route that Paul took on a bible map so that you can get a sense of the places where he was going.

1. What happens that compels Paul and his companions to not go to certain regions but take a trip to Macedonia (modern day Greece)?

2. If God is telling Paul to go to Macedonia in such a direct and supernatural way, what does that suggest?

Notice v10 where it says 'we'. This is the first of many 'we' references in Acts. It was probably around this time that Luke the author of Acts, became a travelling companion of Paul.

3. After a few rest breaks, Paul and his friends arrive at Philippi, a major city in Macedonia. In Philippi we're told about three people and their conversion/transformation. Fill in the below table about these three people:

Name	Their situation/job	How they come to hear about Jesus

4. For each person, how do you see that it's God at work, not just Paul who is speaking a message:

- a. Lydia
- b. Slave girl
- c. The jailer

For Today: If you are someone who is a follower of Jesus – think about how you came to know Him. Whether it was an identifiable moment in time or not, think about how God was at work so that you could accept the message.

thoughts. questions. insights.

Personal Preparation 2 - The Word Travels to Thessalonica

The Word is on the move again. In chapter 16, several people became followers of Jesus in Philippi. Now it's time for message to go to Thessalonica. **Read 17:1-15**

1. What is unique about this city (17:1) compared to Philippi (16:13, 16)?
2. In Acts 9:15, we learnt that Saul-Paul had a job to do – “to carry my [Jesus] before the Gentiles and their kings.” The second part of his mission was “and before the people of Israel”. How do we see in Thessalonica, that despite opposition to him, Paul hasn't in any way given up on the Jews?
3. What is central to Saul's message to the Jews? v2-3.

thoughts. questions. insights.

Growth Group Discussion Questions

In the Personal Preparation questions, we've travelled with Paul to Philippi and Thessalonica. We'll re-trace our steps through those cities today as well as visit one more city with Paul – Berea. The thing we'll focus on in our group time, is the different reactions to the gospel. While there are those who accept the message and become followers of Jesus, there are others who reject Him.

Read Acts 16:1-17:15

1. In this section, we have different individuals/groups who become followers of Jesus. In each case, a different emphasis is given for how they became a Christian. By looking at the below verses, where does the emphasis lie in each case:

- a. Lydia – 16:14
- b. The Jailer – 16:31
- c. The Thessalonian Jews - 17:3-4
- d. The Bereans – 17:11

2. If you are comfortable, share with the group how any of these emphases strike a chord with you when you think back to how you became a Christian

3. In this section there are some beautiful moments when people accept the message of Jesus, but there are also some 'ugly' moments when others reject that message. What is similar in what happens in Philippi (16:19-24) and Thessalonica (17:5-9)?

4. What are the charges that are brought against Paul and Silas in each of the cities?

5. Are any of the charges true?

6. Why do you think these charges are brought against Paul and Silas? To help in your thinking, there was another time when similar charges were made as well. See Luke 23:1-2.

7. What is the real motivation behind the opposition to Paul and his message?

8. How would you compare the Thessalonians of 17:1-4 and the Bereans of 17:10-12 with those opposed to Paul?

9. We often think that people reject Jesus because they have such well thought through arguments. If we tried to argue with them, we fear their piercing theological observations will leave us lost for words. But how does the events of Acts 16 and 17 change our perspective on what is behind opposition to the gospel?

10. It is thought that part of the reason Luke wrote Acts, was because he wanted to address suspicions that this new religion of Christianity was anti-Roman government and also an illegitimate and superstitious off-shoot of Judaism. How does showing the events of Acts 16 and 17 help address such suspicions?

11. To grow as a follower of Jesus, we all need to follow the example of the Bereans – to receive the message with eagerness and examine the Scriptures. How are you going with this – at church on Sunday, in growth group, by yourself? What is getting in the way and what can you do about it?

pray.

- For our friends and family. As with what happened with Lydia, pray that God would open their hearts to the Gospel.
- That they would have an eagerness to examine the claims of Jesus in the Bible for themselves.
- For ourselves: that we would have an eagerness to examine the Scriptures and learn, and would constantly grow as followers of Jesus.