



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 14 – STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 16:1–17:34

DAY ONE

1. What was your favorite thought from the Spiritual Reflection or commentary from Lesson 13 (Acts 14 and 15)?

Read Acts 16:1-10

2a. In last week's lesson Paul and Silas visited Syrian and Cilician believers Paul had previously helped convert. In today's lesson they continued on their journey. To what two cities **did** they travel and who did they encounter?

b. List all of the things you learn about this person from verses 1 and 2.

3a. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; however, Timothy was not circumcised. What did Paul do to try to ensure Timothy's acceptance by the Jews in Lystra and Iconium?

b. In last week's lesson (Chapter 15) we learned it had been decided that Gentiles did not need circumcision. Read and record a phrase from 1 Corinthians 9:20 which helps you better understand why, even though no longer required, Paul felt that Timothy should be circumcised in order to be more "at one" with other Jewish people.

4a. As they moved from town to town, the travelers delivered the decisions that had been determined by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (verse 4). According to verse 5, what was the result?

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b. In verses 6-8 we learn that Paul and Timothy went through Phrygia and Galatia and by Mysia on their way down to Troas. What two places did the Holy Spirit (also called the Spirit of Jesus) not allow them to go?

THINK: In today's passage, we see clearly that Paul and his companions are being led by the Lord to cross over from Asia Minor to Macedonia, where for the first time Christianity entered Europe. Many members of Cornerstone have ancestors who came from Europe. Consider how long your family has been Christian. How (or where) do you think the first Christian member of your family may have been converted? Take a moment to thank God for the gift of conversion!

5a. During the night, Paul had a vision. What did he see and hear (verse 9)?

b. As a result of this vision, verse 10 states that "we" immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia. Who are the "we" and what motivated them?

NOTE: This is the first time Luke steps into the story as a narrator. This will occur again in later chapters.

6. CONNECTION: In today's passage we saw Paul and his companions being led by the Lord. Because they were prayerful people, they were alert and submissive to God's promptings. While we may not always understand His will, by prayer we too can come to discern God's path for us. Sometimes there are signs and indications pointing us in certain directions. Recall a recent time when, through prayer, you felt you were being guided to a "right place." In what way did you discern that you were being led? Describe this "leading" experience for your small group.

With your role as God's servant in mind, read and record Psalm 25:4 and let these words begin your prayer.

DAY TWO

Read Acts 16:11-24

7a. As today's lesson begins, Paul and Silas had set sail from Troas to several places on the continent we now call Europe, including Samothrace, Neapolis, and Philippi (verses 11-12). According to verse 12, how is Philippi described, and how long did they stay there?

b. Apparently there was no synagogue in Philippi. According to the first part of verse 13, when the Sabbath came, where did Paul, Silas and company go, and why?

8a. They sat down and spoke to a group of women there, including a woman named Lydia. In what ways is Lydia described in verse 14 (give a complete answer)?

NOTE: "Purple goods" relates usually to cloths dyed from a very high-priced gland of a small mollusk. Because of its high costs, purple was worn by rulers and the very wealthy.

b. As verse 15 begins, Lydia and her whole household were baptized. Summarize Lydia's urging in the remainder of verse 15, and the result.

9a. At another time Paul and Silas returned to the place of prayer by the river in Philippi, and met a slave girl. What things do we learn about this woman, and what was she saying about Paul and his companions as she followed them (verses 16-17)?

b. The men who owned the slave girl were using her to make money from her fortune telling. Although the things she was saying were true, Paul was annoyed (in some translations, he was "troubled"). What did Paul do and say to the spirit within the slave girl, and what was the result (verse 18)?

NOTE: Divination is prohibited in the bible (see Deuteronomy 18:10-13). It is a violation of the First Commandment.

10a. The girl's owners were angry because their "money maker" was gone. They dragged Paul and Silas into the marketplace before the authorities (verse 19). Summarize the reason the girl's owners gave the magistrates for their accusations (verses 20 and 21).

b. Who joined in and what actions were taken by the magistrates (verse 22)?

11. Briefly recall what happened to Paul and Silas according to verses 23-24.

12. **CONNECTION:** After being thrown into prison and severely beaten, Paul and Silas found themselves in a very dark place. No matter how dark, prison for Paul and Silas was to become another place to praise God and further their mission of winning souls. Each of us also face prison experiences in life. While not literally behind bars, our entrapment and pain can be just as real and just as dark. Our "prisons" could be emotional, financial, or physical. Some of us even

find ourselves in relationship prisons. No matter the prison, our God is always with us and knows our needs, whether those needs are escape, or comfort, or strength, and, like Paul and Silas, our prisons can become great places to further our missions and to praise God. Relate to your small group an example of how your faith in the Lord has allowed you or others to benefit from a "prison experience".

Read and record Psalm 69:33 and let thoughts of the loving care you have received from the Lord in the dark times, as well as the bright times of your life, lead you to prayer.

DAY THREE

Read Acts 16:25-40

13a. When our passage opens, Paul and Silas were locked in stocks in an “innermost” cell of the prison in Philippi. Yet at midnight, what amazing things were they doing (beginning of verse 25)?

b. What phrase at the end of verse 25 indicates that other inmates were influenced by this?

14a. Describe the incredible events that took place that night as recorded in verse 26.

b. In verse 27, the jailer who was responsible for the prisoners awoke and saw the prison doors open, and assumed that the prisoners had escaped. What was he about to do and what stopped him, according to verse 28?

15a. After the jailer called for lights and saw that, miraculously, his prisoners were still there, he turned away from his thoughts of suicide (verse 29) and instead fell down before Paul and Silas. What is his question to them and what is their answer (verses 30-31)?

b. Read and record these passages which also recount the path to salvation:

Romans 10:9

Mark 16:16

16a. Paul and Silas spoke the word of God to the jailer and all who were in his household and baptized them (verse 32). Then the jailer took Paul and Silas and washed their wounds. He brought them up into the house and set food before them (verse 33 and first part of 34). Record from the end of verse 34 the jailer's reaction to his conversion.

b. According to verse 35, when morning came the magistrates sent the police to the jailer's home with a message: "Let those men go." The jailer reported the message to Paul, asking him to go out in peace. Briefly summarize Paul's reaction to this message from verse 37.

17. It was illegal to whip a Roman citizen or unfairly imprison them. When the magistrates realized that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they became afraid and apologized. The magistrates took them out and asked Paul and Silas to leave the city (verses 38- 39). Where did they go and what did they do there (verse 40)?

18. CONNECTION: Today we see two occasions when Paul was free to "flee" a bad situation - when his chains were loosed in prison and when the police came to the jailer's home. In both cases, Paul held back and waited, and good things happened. The jailer and his whole household were converted, and the magistrates recognized the rights of the Christian believers as Roman citizens. We may want at times to charge forward when there is a "break" in a bad situation. Yet often there is greater good in waiting and praying for God's guidance. Recall a time when you could have acted impulsively, but by going slowly and listening for your "inner voice," you realized an even better result. Briefly describe the situation.

Read and record the first line of Psalm 37:7. Begin your prayer being still before the Lord.

DAY FOUR
Read Acts 17:1-9

19a. After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica (about 100 miles west of Philippi) where there was a Jewish synagogue. On three Sabbaths, Paul went into the synagogue. Explain what he did and said from the end of verse 2 and verse 3.

b. Many Old Testament verses prophesy the need for the Messiah to suffer, die and rise again. While we cannot know which Old Testament scriptures Paul argued, select one of these prophetic verses which is especially meaningful to you and record it:

Psalm 22:14-17

Isaiah 53:5-7

Isaiah 53:10

20. Paul was convincing. What does verse 4 tell us that indicates this?

21. The Jews reacted violently to Paul's success in converting Jews, devout Greeks, and even some leading women to Christianity. In their jealousy, they went into the market place to stir up the public against Paul. Who did they recruit and what actions did they take (verse 5)?

22. The Jews and their ruffian cohorts were seeking Paul and Silas. When they couldn't find them, they dragged some of the converts, including Jason, before the city authorities. Summarize their accusations (from verse 6 and 7).

23. What effect did all of this have on "the people" and the city officials, and what actions did they take to end this disturbance (verses 8-9)?

24. CONNECTION: Nothing more is known about Jason than what we read of him in this passage. He is one of the unsung heroes of the early church. His faithful devotion to Christianity cost him dearly - his house was attacked, he was dragged by a mob before the authorities, and had to pay bail to obtain his freedom. There have been countless people like Jason through the ages - people who have played significant roles in the church and received little or no recognition. We will meet them in heaven. You probably know or know of someone, who, like

Jason, is an unsung faith hero. Record some details about that person to share with your small group.

Read and record 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 from Paul's first letter to this community. As you begin your prayer, pray for all unsung heroes of the church, living and deceased.

DAY FIVE

Read Acts 17:10-23

25a. As today's lesson begins, and in the face of certain persecution, the believers in Thessalonica sent Paul and Silas away to Berea for safety. When did they go and what was the first thing they did upon their arrival?

b. Summarize the reactions of the Jews in Berea to Paul and Silas' message (verses 11-12).

26a. When the Jewish nonbelievers from Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching the Word in Berea, they followed him there. What did they do (verse 13)?

b. The believers immediately sent Paul away to the coast to escape by the sea, with Silas and Timothy staying behind (verse 14). After Paul had arrived in Athens, what message did he send back to Timothy and Silas, according to verse 15?

27a. While Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy to arrive in Athens, he was deeply distressed. Refer to verse 16 and explain for what reason he was upset.

b. What did he do as a result (verse 17)?

28a. According to verse 18, he also debated with some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Look up in an encyclopedia or dictionary the definition of Epicurean and Stoic philosophies and write a few words about each.

b. At first, these philosophers considered him a “babbling” who seemed “to be a proclaimer of foreign divinities” because Paul was proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. They took him to the Areopagus to pose an important question. What was it and what reason did they give (verses 19-20)?

29a. Verse 21 records that the Athenians and foreigners living in Athens “spent their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.” Paul (who was a Roman citizen educated in a Greek Gymnasium) was completely up to the challenge. Record the compliment with which he began his speech to them in verse 22.

b. From Paul's knowledge of Greek culture and worship, he was able to remind the Greeks of their tradition of honoring, among their own gods, unnamed gods of which they might not be aware. From verse 23, record how Paul used this tradition to introduce the true Lord of all.

30. CONNECTION: Paul's background and education prepared him well to meet and debate with Jews, devout persons, and representatives of various Greek philosophies. To the Epicureans and Stoics, Paul even offered compliments on how religious they appeared to be (as evidenced by their many altars). Instead of criticizing their faith, he found a bridge over which they could cross from their Pantheism to worship of the One God. We, too, sometimes want to harshly confront a coworker, spouse, child, or friend when we think they are in the wrong, rather than taking the calm and logical approach that Paul used in Athens. Can we be as gentle as Paul was in Athens, or must we always come with “both barrels loaded”? Think of a time recently when you had to confront another. Which approach did you use? What was the outcome for you?

Read and record 2 Timothy 2:24-25. Let the thoughts of those verses lead you into prayer.

DAY SIX

Read Acts 17:24-34

31. As today's lesson begins, Paul continued to preach to the Greeks about the one true God and His relationship to man. List his convincing description from verses 24-25.

32. Paul went on to explain how by creating Adam, all men have a common thread through their ancestry. From Adam on, God allowed man to inhabit the earth and to search for Him. Record Paul's beautiful conclusion from verse 28.

33a. What caution did Paul give the people about their worship of idols (verse 29)?

b. Paul's next statement regarding the resurrection of the Messiah challenges the roots of Greek belief in the immortality of the soul. In what way does Paul say God's attitude toward us appears to have changed, what does God now command, and for what reason is this now so important according to verses 30-31?

34. There were two reactions from the Athenians to this talk of resurrection from the dead. One reaction was scoffing. The other is recorded in verse 32 as a quote. The words of the quotation are interesting. Record these words and comment on what you think this may have meant.

35. At this point Paul left them, but instead of letting him go away alone, some of them joined him and became believers. Record their names (verse 34).

36. CONNECTION: Today's passage contains the truth about God, the source of life. God is the Lord of heaven and earth. All life belongs to God, and all of us share in His life, from that One Source. Anyone and anything we see living is a "sharer" in God's life. We need to hold fast to that awesome truth. Wherever we see life - anywhere and in whatever form - it belongs to God.

That makes it precious and gives all of us a share in the responsibility for it. What particular meaning does this have for you today? Record some thoughts here.

Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I consecrated you.” Consider that these words were written about you. With that thought in mind, begin your prayer.

After completing this lesson, read Chapters 16 and 17 (refer to pages 103-111 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 121-133 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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