

LESSON 13

February 28, 2021

Unit III: The Call of Women
Showing Generous Hospitality

DEVOTIONAL READING: Psalm 33:1-12

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

PRINT PASSAGES: Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

Key Verse—When she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. (Acts 16:15, KJV)

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When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us. (Acts 16:15, NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Consider how Lydia used her gifts and her place in society to support Paul’s ministry.
- Repent of times you have looked down on others who have not had the same opportunities or advantages.
- Serve others joyfully through whatever means are at your disposal.

KEY TERMS

Gathered (Acts 16:13)—Greek: *sunerchomai* (soon-er’-khom-ahee): came together; assembled; “resorted” (KJV).

Heart (Acts 16:14)—Greek: *kardia* (kar-dee’-ah): the heart, mind, character, inner self, will, intention, center.

Persuaded (Acts 16:15)—Greek: *parabiazomai* (par-ab-ee-ad’-zom-ahee): employed force; pressed; was constrained by entreaties; “constrained” (KJV).

Speaking (Acts 16:13, NASB)—Greek: *laleó* (lal-eh’-o): to talk; “spake” (KJV); “speak” (NIV).

INTRODUCTION

You may or may not recall the story of a young diner waitress who helped an elderly man cut up his food. The waitress worked at a Waffle House in Texas to earn money for college tuition. During her shift, an elderly man came and placed a breakfast order. The waitress later learned that he had been in and out of the hospital for the past five weeks. The waitress delivered his order and then proceeded with her normal routine. As usual, she asked the customer if he needed anything else, then continued to serve the tables of other restaurant guests. As she passed the man, she noticed his considerable struggle to cut up his food. Without a second thought, she

assisted him by cutting up his food for him, even as the cook called her to pick up additional orders. As she cut up his food, the two exchanged stories regarding their life experiences. In the meantime, others were watching. People are always watching, the good and the bad. One of the observers snapped a picture of the encounter. The picture went viral and created much positive feedback. When the young waitress was questioned about her motives for assisting the elderly customer, the waitress said she was simply doing the right thing. In recognition of her deed, she received a \$16,000 college scholarship and became a social media hero. We need more heroes who are willing to do the right thing even if it feels like an inconvenience, or an insignificant or lowly task in the grand scheme of things. In God's hand, a little is a lot and ordinary becomes extraordinary when done in love.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Paul's normal mission strategy included going to a large city and speaking at an established synagogue on the Sabbath day (see Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; 17:1, 2, 10, 17). In Philippi, he went in search of a synagogue, but found that none had been established. Apparently, there were fewer than ten Jewish men in that city, so the women met as an ersatz, or substitute, synagogue near the riverside. It is important to note that Paul had a vision of a man calling him and his missionary party to Macedonia. God intervenes in various ways to position us to do what is needed to promote His purposes in the lives of others. The first converts in Europe were a group of women who held to their faith despite being a small and relatively powerless minority. The theme of God's empowerment of the powerless is found throughout Scripture. For example, the Nation of Israel was born to a succession of infertile couples (the patriarchs of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were all married to barren women). The second king of Israel (David) was the youngest of his father's household, yet he deposed a king who had the appearance of a warrior (Saul). The Scriptures are filled with many similar examples. Paul reminded the Corinthians not to boast of social standing but in what the Lord does through them. This would be the case of Lydia, who was a seller of purple cloth, a rare and fine quality of fabric. Lydia was a wealthy woman, one given to hospitality and to generosity. The women worshipped at the riverside not only because they had no synagogue, but possibly because the colony was intolerant of their religious belief. While the Roman Empire tolerated established religions, its predecessor, the Hellenistic Empire, had an often-hostile relationship with Judaism. It is very likely that in a colony that was named after Alexander the Great, the Jewish population would be limited and met with hostility (see Acts 16:20-22).

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Serving by the River for Christ (*Acts 16:11-15, 40*)

KJV

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

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40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

NIV

11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis.

12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

14 One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us

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40 After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left.

Paul received a vision from the Lord instructing him to go to Macedonia to help there (see Acts 16:9-10). Luke briefly summarizes mission as a response to the vision that Paul received regarding his calling to share the Gospel. Luke records the voyage from Troas to Samothracia and then to Neapolis (verse 11). From there, the team travelled to Macedonia, where they joined with a colony of Christians and stayed there for a certain, undisclosed number of days (verse 12). As was Paul's tradition, on the Sabbath day he sought a place to go and ended up by the riverside, where they heard a prayer meeting was being held (verse 13a). While there, they sat down and engaged in a conversation with the women gathered there (verse 13b). Luke notes that one of the women, Lydia, a worshiper of God and businesswoman from Thyatira, openly received the message of God as shared by the apostle Paul (verse 14). Her business included the selling of purple linen, a rare, expensive fabric likely manufactured in her hometown of Thyatira. Apparently, the Word pricked her heart to the extent that she and her entire family agreed to be baptized immediately, there by the river. She then offered to host the group in her home (verse 15a). It appears the group was initially reluctant but responded to Lydia's persistent and persuasive manner by staying with her (verse 15b). The experience with Lydia must have proven favorable, as Paul and Silas left prison and returned to Lydia's house where all the "brothers and sisters" were gathered (verse 40a). The record indicated that they received encouragement from those there before leaving (verse 40b). The encouragement came after Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in jail. Once they were found to be Roman citizens, they were asked to leave the city (see verses 35-39). Paul and Silas left the jail and headed to the

home of Lydia, where they comforted those there. It is believed that Paul and Silas comforted them and encouraged them to carry on with the ministry work begun by the river.

What Do You Think? When designated leaders are not available, how should laypeople carry on?

Serving for the Righteousness of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:26-30)

KJV

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

NIV

26 Brothers and sisters think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,

29 so that no one may boast before him.

30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Jesus has empowered us to serve others for the sake of His own righteousness. Our “serving for” is not to attain personal recognition or righteousness—for we know that we cannot work for our own salvation. We serve because of Jesus’ righteousness and redemptive love displayed on Calvary. Paul highlighted this as he called the church’s attention to their spiritual reality. Occasionally, everyone should examine their own spiritual standing with God rather than being satisfied with public praise and opinions or others. Paul notes that based on worldly standards, there were not many wise, mighty, or noble men among them (verse 26). Yet, Paul explained that God, in His sovereign wisdom and power, chose the things the world discounted as foolish to baffle those who consider themselves to be wise (verse 27a). Additionally, God has chosen the weak to unseat the strong (verse 27b), and the things that are considered subpar and worthless to bring down those considered valuable (verse 28). Before the church could even consider being offended by the words, Paul pointed them back to the awesomeness of God, who often chooses to use ordinary, flawed people so that no one could take the glory for themselves and boast of their relationship and righteousness in God (verse 29). Our boasting should only be in Jesus’ righteousness that renewed our relationship with God. The glory of the church is not rooted in human personality and skill, but in the wisdom and order of God’s perfect plan (verse 30). “Sanctification” is used in its immediate and complete sense (see 1 Corinthians 1:2). Righteousness enables us to stand before God in the court of divine justice, while sanctification equips us to serve Him in our temple for divine service. “Redemption” is possibly a reference to

the final redemption of the body (see Romans 8:23). The aim of the work of Christ Jesus is to glorify God. Jesus completed His work, so let us serve (by His righteousness) so that everyone might have an opportunity to know Jesus.

What Do You Think? When opportunities arise, do you glory in personal recognition or do all you can to promote Jesus Christ instead?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

This lesson unit dealt with the call of women in the work of Christ. In the lessons, we have studied how God used women for the manifestation of His glory and grace. This week's lesson taught about the power of our serving God where we are even if the resources and number of people seem minimal. The women could not form a formal synagogue, so they gathered at the river. It was at the river that they made a focused decision to pray to and praise God. Their hospitable ways allowed for the ministry to flourish in that community and ultimately allowed for the spreading of the Gospel. Let us go and do likewise.

YOUR LIFE

This week, pause, pray, and reflect on any excuse you have made for not serving God—whether by attending an additional worship service or volunteering in a ministry. Strive to do better by starting this week and serving somewhere outside your comfort zone.

YOUR WORLD!

This week, after taking up personal reflection time, seek a fellow Christian you can encourage to join you on your new journey. Be sure to make your invitation encouraging and not demeaning.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, please help us to be inclusive in the ministry work that You have planned for us. Remind us by Your Spirit that the work is not for self-glory but for Your glory. Let everything we do be pleasing in Your sight and teach us to graciously receive all who accept Your Word and proclaim You as their personal Lord and Savior. Help us to understand that You are more than able to work anywhere through anyone. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Reflect on the fact that following the command of God, the people of Israel left Egypt under the leadership of a faithful prophet, Moses, who became a model for prophets to come.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(March 1-7, 2021)

Moses: Prophet of Deliverance

MONDAY, March 1: "Remember God's Acts of Deliverance" (Psalm 77:11-20)

TUESDAY, March 2: "Listen to Moses, Witness with Authority" (Luke 16:24-31)

WEDNESDAY, March 3: "Instructions for Observing the Passover" (Exodus 12:43-50)

THURSDAY, March 4: “Aliens and Unclean Share Passover Meal” (Numbers 9:9-14)

FRIDAY, March 5: “Consecrate All Firstborn to God” (Exodus 13:1-2; Deuteronomy 15:19-20)

SATURDAY, March 6: “Observe Festival of Unleavened Bread” (Exodus 13:3-10)

SUNDAY, March 7: “God Leads through Prophets” (Deuteronomy 18:15-22)