

## Closed Doors; Open Hearts

We are called to be witnesses for Jesus (Acts 1:8). As we move through our days, God wants to use us to help point others to Jesus and the new life that can be found in him. But we are not alone in this. It is not all up to us. God is at work! He works in our lives to lead us to those whom He is preparing to hear the message of the gospel AND He is preparing hearts to hear. In our passage today, Luke focuses on Paul's ministry to two individuals who meet Jesus. They meet Jesus not because Paul had a strategic plan to reach them, but because God led Paul and his team to them. God used closed doors to get Paul in front of open hearts.

### Read Acts 16:6-40

1. Earlier in Acts we read about how thousands were added to the church (e.g., Peter's preaching in 2:41; 4:4). Why do you think this chapter focuses primarily on just two individuals coming to faith in Jesus?
2. Paul clearly planned and strategized to spread the gospel. What do you think this experience of closed doors in Asia might have been like for him? What does it reveal about Paul's sensitivity to the Spirit?
3. What was God's part and what was Paul and Silas' part in Lydia's salvation?
4. How would you describe what Paul and Silas suffered as a result of the incident with the slave girl?
5. What was God's part and what was Paul and Silas' part in the jailer's salvation?

Brian said:

One of the things that is so clear in this passage, and in fact in the whole book of Acts, is that God leads his messengers. Twice in our passage we see how the Spirit of God closed doors to the Gospel in Asia. We see God giving Paul a vision directing him to where he wants him to go. . . Paul was willing to be led. He was sensitive to the Spirit of God. And as a result, he sets aside his plans, pivots, and travels to Europe where he meets Lydia, shares the gospel with her, and a church was born in Europe. Have you ever considered that as you move through your days that God may be doing similar things? I believe that God is still opening hearts to the gospel and that if we are willing to be led, He will lead us to people with open hearts. The question is, are we willing to be led? Will we be sensitive to God's Spirit? Will we allow our plans to be interrupted and changed to follow God's leading?

6. What does it look like to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading? Would you say you are willing to be led as you move through your days?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. One way Brian suggested to grow in being willing to be led is to start every day expressing something like this to God, *"Father, my life is in your hands. I'm fully available to be used by you today to help point someone to Jesus and so guide me by your Spirit."* What do you think of this idea?

Brian said:

Moving from the closed door of a prison cell to the open heart of the jailer required Paul's willingness to suffer well. God uses hard circumstances to get Paul and Silas where he needs them to be – in jail. And while they are in jail, they had a choice to make. They could complain. They could be angry at God. But they weren't. Instead, they chose to suffer well. And as a result, a Roman jailer met Jesus. Have you considered the possibility that God wants to use your suffering for good? That God wants to demonstrate the power of the Gospel through your faith-filled approach to the things you suffer? People pay attention to how we suffer. Sometimes this is one of the most powerful testimonies we can give for the gospel.

8. What do you think about this idea that suffering well is a powerful testimony for the gospel? Would you say you suffer well?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What is your main application from this study?