

Philippians Sermon Series: An Exploration of Christian Joy

Sermon-based Small Group Guide - Week of Sunday, January 13th

Sermon Title: Who Are These Guys?

Scripture Texts: Philippians 1:1-2, Acts 16:6-15

Welcome

Greet everyone as they arrive and check in with one another. Provide refreshments if possible.

Introduction

- If this is a new group, or if there is a new member, please make sure to spend time introducing everyone.
- You might spend a little time talking about the purpose of a Small Group to see how you each have different and/or similar expectations and emphasis.
- Follow up on the Application Activities from last week. Has anyone been using a word or phrase from the Romans passage to keep the reminder of living in joy close to their heart? Has anyone tried journaling this week to as a way of choosing joy? Did anyone invite someone to an opportunity to hear the gospel at ALPHA or somewhere else? If so, how did it go?

Discussion

Story Question

Use Kevin's story about his bible study group made up of "outsiders" as an icebreaker in your group. Kevin said he felt like an insider in this group of outsiders. When have you felt the same? (This is a question about the past. Later we'll ask a similar question about the present.)

Scripture Exploration

Can you recall all the characters Kevin listed in the story of the forming of the church in Philippi? What do you remember Kevin telling us about them? (We'll find out more about these characters as we read and discuss the scripture through the steps below.)

Acts 16:5-15 – Ask someone to read this passage out loud.

Lydia is one of the key characters in this passage. Kevin suggested Lydia was an outsider because of her social status as a Jew, a women and a foreigner. In what roles or places do you currently feel like an outsider? Where do you feel excluded or marginalized?

What are some of the ways the Holy Spirit was active in this passage?

(Note: Answer this question for each verse from 5-10 and then as a whole for the portion from 11-15. Notice the means and people used by the Holy Spirit to give guidance. Where there are no details imagine what might have taken place.)

Verse 14 says, "The Lord opened [Lydia's] heart to respond to Paul's message."

When did God first open your heart to respond to the gospel? Who did God used in this process?

In what ways might you feel God opening your heart to respond today? In what ways are you feeling closed? Share an example of a time you were able to let God open up a closed place in your life.

Acts 16:16-38 - Choose Option 1 or 2 (below)

to find out more about the city of Philippi and the people in it.

Option 1 – Lectio Devina (Read the follow brief description and follow the steps below)

Lectio Devina (Holy Reading) is a wonderful way of reading scripture to identify with it and hear what God is saying to us through it. The passage is read aloud 4 times with a different way of listening through each reading. Each reading is also followed by a moment of silence and then discussion. Have the group leader read the passage all 4 times so group members can be listeners.

1. Before the first reading – ask everyone to listen for all the characters in the story and write a list.
 - a. Read Acts 16:16-38 (first time)
 - b. brief silence

- c. Share your lists to make sure everyone got all the characters.
(slave girl, owners of slave girl, Paul, Silas, magistrates, crowd, jailer, prisoners, jailer's family, Lydia, the brothers)
2. Before the second reading – ask everyone in the group to choose one of the characters and imagine themselves in the story as that character. (You could assign characters if you want to make sure several are covered.)
 - a. Read Acts 16:16-38 (second time)
 - b. brief silence
 - c. Have each person share what they heard and felt as that character.
3. Before the third reading – ask everyone in the group to listen for a word or phrase that stands out to them.
 - a. Read Acts 16:16-38 (third time)
 - b. brief silence
 - c. Have each person write down their word or phrase but don't share them yet.
4. Before the fourth reading – ask everyone in the group to listen again for that word or phrase and how God might be asking them to respond to this passage of scripture.
 - a. Read Acts 16:16-38 (fourth time)
 - b. brief silence
 - c. Have each person share their word or phrase and what they have heard.

Option 2 – Ask someone in the group to read aloud Acts 16:16-38

Identify all the characters in the story and discuss what the scripture tells us about each one.

(slave girl, owners of slave girl, Paul, Silas, magistrates, crowd, jailer, other prisoners, jailers family, Lydia, the brothers)

In what ways are each of these characters or groups an insider or outsider?

How does each character or group respond through the development of the story?

(Try to discuss the response of all characters and groups but focus especially on Paul and Silas and the jailer.)

Who are the various social/religious groups in this story? What is the climate among these groups?

(Hints: Verse 13 says the place of prayer is outside the city. Luke and Timothy were Gentiles - they were not seized and put in prison along with Paul and Silas who were Jews. Notice what happens in verse 38 when the magistrates find out that Paul and Silas have the rare privilege of being Roman citizens – they are “in” their group.)

Sermon Content Questions

Kevin said in the sermon that we tend to be more open when we are on the outside and more closed when we are on the inside. What does he mean by this? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Quote from Sermon – “Where I feel outside I’m more attentive, open and listening for good news.”

In what ways is this true for you? If these benefits of being an outsider are true, why do we try so hard to be on the inside? In what ways should we seek to be outsiders?

Application

(Choose 1 or 2 of the following questions based on what has been shared so far. Discuss it and make a plan of action.)

1. Who do you identify with as outsiders? Or, who are the outsiders that you feel compassion for?
In what ways are you, or could you be, open to showing hospitality to these outsiders?
When you go to outsiders should you remain with them as outsiders or should you invite them in?
2. How can we, as a church, be inviting newcomers and helping them feel welcome? How can we use our insider status in a positive way toward outsiders?
3. What can we do to make ourselves more open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, like Lydia?
4. How can we as a group be more open . . . more open to listening to God . . . more open to outsiders?
5. Jesus, the ultimate insider, became the ultimate outsider. How can we use His example to invite others to Him?

Prayer

Pray for one another according to what was shared during the discussion time.

My prayer is that God will open our hearts to listen eagerly like Lydia... that God will open our hearts to respond with hospitality like Lydia... and make room in our home for more outsiders... outsiders like us.

- Kevin Finch

Vivianne Schuur found this article about Lydia to share with you.

Lydia - Woman Seeking God

by Teddi Neevel

Scripture: Acts 16:13-15

Act 16:13 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.

Act 16:14 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.

Act 16:15 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.

The women were gathered at a common spot...the riverside. They had come together as women are inclined to do and they were there with a purpose. They were there to pray together. This was an Asian city and there was no synagogue there. Yet, for some reason the women had started gathering together for prayer. Lydia was a common name for a Greek or Roman woman but not for a Jew.

Thyatira is an area that is recorded in history as being where the finest dyeing was done and their purple dyes were exceptional. Remember that purple was considered a royal color and was very expensive. Obviously, Lydia was very good at her trade because her household was large enough for her to invite the missionaries to come and stay in her home.

An analysis of verse 14 will help us to understand a bit more about Lydia.

“which worshipped (to revere, that is, adore: - devout, religious, worship.)

God--that is, was a proselyte to the Jewish faith, and as such present at this meeting.

whose heart (the thoughts or feelings mind) the Lord opened (to open thoroughly, literally (as a first born)--that is, the Lord Jesus (see Act_16:15; and compare Luk_24:45; Mat_11:27).

she attended to the things . . . spoken by Paul--"showing that the inclination of the heart towards the truth originates not in the will of man. The first disposition to turn to the Gospel is a work of grace" [OLSHAUSEN]. Observe here the place assigned to "giving attention" or "heed" to the truth--that species of attention which consists in having the whole mind engrossed with it, and in apprehending and drinking it in, in its vital and saving character.”(Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary)

The Bible doesn't tell us how long Paul and Timothy stayed there with Lydia in Philippi but they were there preaching for some time. 1 and 2 Corinthians were letters written from Philippi. The demon possessed girl followed them around as they preached. They were beaten and jailed, but the jailer and his family were saved. And when asked to leave the city they returned to Lydia's home.

Act 16:40 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.

A woman of Thyatira, a "seller of purple," who dwelt in Philippi ([Acts 16:14,15](#)). She was not a Jewess but a proselyte. The Lord opened her heart as she heard the gospel from the lips of Paul ([16:13](#)). She thus became the first in Europe who embraced Christianity. She was a person apparently of considerable wealth, for she could afford to give a home to Paul and his companions.