THE GOSPEL PROJECT FOR STUDENTS

THE GOD WHO SENDS | SESSION 10

THE GOSPEL IS FOR EVERYONE

Acts 16:11-34

The Point: God uses different ways to communicate His gospel message to different kinds of people.

HIS STORY

A Businesswoman Named Lydia

When the disciples had finally arrived in Macedonia, they were probably full of expectation for God to work in a mighty way. However, after a few days in the city, they didn't experience any dramatic signs, miracles, or conversions. Maybe they had heard wrong? Maybe the vision they had received was made up? Who knows the numerous thoughts that probably went through their minds?

Instead of being discouraged, Paul and the others most likely followed their normal rhythm when they arrived in this new city, seeking out a synagogue to attend on the Sabbath. They didn't find one. A city needed at least ten Jewish men to form a synagogue. Apparently, there were not even that many, so a group of women gathered outside of the city by the river to pray. Paul and the disciples found this group of women and sat down to talk with them.

- **When have you seen the gospel change someone so much that it also affected the people around that person?**

A Demon Possessed Slave Girl

The slave girl and Lydia offer an interesting contrast. Lydia was a business owner who probably had significant financial means. She was probably open and eager to hear about Jesus. It was probably easy for Paul to step into her life with the gospel.

However, the slave girl had nothing, not even her freedom. She was not a worshiper of God and probably not even looking for Him. While this girl might have received a lot of attention in public, she probably frightened most people away from her.

A Prison Guard

When the jailer woke up and saw that the doors of the prison were open, he believed his life was over. He was asleep on the job and thought all the prisoners had escaped. Roman jailers were personally responsible for their prisoners and could be executed for allowing them to escape. However, unknown to him at the time, no one left. Everyone stayed put.

When the jailer realized no one had escaped, something happened in his heart and he realized there really was a God and that Paul and Silas knew this God! Maybe the jailer had heard Paul and Silas preaching in the city before this. Maybe it was seeing them live selflessly and not try to escape when given the opportunity. Maybe it was their concern for his life, or maybe it was that he fell asleep listening to worship songs. Whatever prompted him, we know God was at work, and Paul and Silas were prepared to respond.

Essential Doctrines

New Identity of the Believer: *When a person places his or her faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental change of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God's wrath to being welcomed into God's family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:1-3,19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a "new creation" in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and progressing, becoming more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).*

Leader Note: *Because some content from the Personal Study Guide will not be available on the One Sheet, make sure to adapt the session based on how you use the material with your group.*

YOUR STORY

- **What are some things people might be "enslaved" by today? What would it look like for people to be free from what enslaves them?**
- **Who are the people we most easily look past in our lives? Why? What can we do to not only notice them, but to also step into their lives to bring the hope of the gospel?**
- **In what areas of your life do you need to experience freedom?**
- **What did Paul and Silas' behavior (praying, singing hymns, etc.) in the prison communicate about their faith during those circumstances? What can we learn from their example?**

YOUR MISSION

Head

Through Lydia's story, we discover that God doesn't just care about the large miraculous events or only about the masses. God also cares about the smallest of details, and He is deeply involved in the lives of all people—one person at a time—and we should be too. It is tempting for us to want to be used by God to teach large groups of people or lead many people to Christ, and there's nothing wrong with that. However, we also need to look for that one person, who may even be easy to look past, who is ready to hear and respond to the gospel.

- **Why is it so easy to value ministry to the masses over ministry to the individual?**
- **In what ways are both types of ministry important?**

Heart

Experiences like the jailer's can happen all around us any day. While there may not be a literal earthquake involved, people around us are being shaken in different ways. Just like the jailer, many will experience something or receive news that causes them to despair and feel hopeless. Will we be ready to step in with the hope of the gospel? Others will hear, see, or experience something that opens the door for them to consider the gospel. Will we be ready to turn our attention away from ourselves and what we are doing to share Jesus with them?

- **How are you preaching the gospel with your life as well as your words?**
- **Why is this important?**

Hands

We often have the tendency to keep the good news of the gospel to ourselves after hearing it rather than sharing it with others. We say things like, "I need to grow deeper in my own faith before I can share the gospel with others," or "I need to take apologetic classes before I can share my faith." While it's important for us to grow in our knowledge of the Scriptures and understand how to share and defend the gospel, it's also vital for us to simply build relationships with our lost classmates, friends, and family. Live out the gospel before them, and pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

- **How does this session encourage you in the mission of sharing the gospel?**
- **Who are you burdened to share the good news with this week?**