

[100th Anniversary: Joining God in His Story for Los Angeles](#) - Pastor Ger Jones

Read: Acts 16:6-34

Consider: Beyond a simple journey, Acts 16:6-34 presents a compelling account of how God's Spirit uniquely navigated the early church through closed doors and radical conversions to expand His kingdom.

God's Sovereign Direction

The narrative in Acts 16:6-10 vividly illustrates God's sovereign guidance in the early Christian mission, often through unforeseen diversions. Paul and his team initially intended to preach in the Roman provinces of Asia and Bithynia. However, they were *"kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word"* in Asia, and subsequently, the *"Spirit of Jesus would not allow them"* to enter Bithynia. This repeated divine intervention underscores that God's mission unfolds according to His divine will, rather than human planning.

These divine interventions led the missionary group to Troas, a significant port city. There, Paul received a vision: *"A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'"* (Acts 16:9). This vision was understood by the team as a divine call, prompting their immediate departure for Macedonia and marking the Gospel's momentous entry into Europe. As N.T. Wright observes, God's work frequently appears within life's "complexities" and "blind alleys," challenging our desire for clear, linear pathways. Wright emphasizes that believers are called to cultivate profound trust and obedience even when the path is obscure, recognizing that setbacks can, in fact, be divine redirections towards greater, unforeseen opportunities.

Reaching Phillipi

Reached by Words (Acts 16:11-15)

Paul *"sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled."* Lydia was among these women. She is specifically identified as *"a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God."* Her description as a "worshiper of God" (a "God-fearer") suggests she was a Gentile who had adopted many aspects of Jewish monotheism and was already seeking after the true God. Luke records that *"the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message,"* a divine act that led to her immediate baptism and

that of her entire household. Her subsequent act of *"courageous hospitality"* then provided for the beginning of the Philippian church. Lydia's story powerfully illustrates the gospel's radical inclusivity, as the first European convert was both a woman and a Gentile.

Reached by Wonders (Acts 16:16-24)

The encounter with the slave girl provides a striking example of the gospel's power to confront spiritual oppression. This girl was described as having a *"spirit by which she predicted the future"* a condition that generated considerable financial profit for her owners through fortune-telling. Although her pronouncements about Paul and Silas (that they were "servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation") were factually true, they were spoken from a source of spiritual oppression, not divine revelation. Paul, deeply disturbed, exercised divine authority by commanding the spirit, *"In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!"* (Acts 16:18). This immediate and complete departure of the spirit constitutes the miracle. It was a supernatural intervention that liberated the girl from demonic control, freeing her from a life of exploitation and spiritual bondage.

Reached by Works (Acts 16:25-34)

When the earthquake struck and the prison doors flew open, the jailer assumed all the prisoners had escaped, a failure punishable by death for a Roman guard. He was about to take his own life. Paul, despite being a prisoner, selflessly shouted, *"Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"* This immediate act of compassion and honesty, preventing a desperate suicide, profoundly impacted the jailer and opened his heart to listen. His desperate inquiry, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*, articulated desire for total deliverance. Paul's response was, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."* The jailer's immediate response to their message was to care for their physical wounds, washing them from their recent beating. Paul and Silas accepted this act of care. Subsequently, they facilitated the jailer's and his household's baptism, a public declaration of their new faith. Finally, the jailer brought them into his home, set a meal before them, and rejoiced with his entire household.

Discussion Questions

1. Ger shared how his heart broke for Los Angeles, seeing people pursuing "leisure, pleasure, treasure" instead of Jesus. Acts 16 shows God's heart for lost people through Paul's unexpected journey. How can we cultivate a similar "heartbreak" for our city, moving beyond comfort to actively engage with those who don't know Jesus?
2. Ger highlighted "words, wonders, and works" as paradigms for reaching a city. Lydia was converted through "words," the slave girl through "wonders," and the jailer

through "works." Reflect on your personal strengths or comfort zones. Which of these three "paradigms" do you feel most equipped to use, and which might God be calling you to grow in?

3. The slave girl's healing led to Paul's imprisonment, but his selfless act of preventing the jailer's suicide revealed Jesus' love to an enemy. Ger emphasized that following Jesus means laying down our lives "for the benefit of our enemies." What practical steps can we take to model this radical, self-sacrificial love in our everyday interactions with those who might be difficult or even hostile towards us?
4. Ger challenged us to consider what God could do in our city in the next hundred years if we, as God's people, are equipped with "words, wonders, and works." What is one tangible action you or your community could take this week to actively participate in God's ongoing story of transforming our city, trusting that "what He has begun, He will complete"?

Pray: Close your group time by praying for one another. You may want to pray as one group or break into smaller groups to pray. Either way is fine. As you pray, take time to:

1. **Listen** - what have you become aware of in this lesson and discussion time that God wants to talk to you about? Take time to sit quietly and listen to the Holy Spirit.
2. **Offer** - whatever has been shown to you, now is the time to surrender your fears, hopes, and questions to God.
3. **Receive** - as we surrender our fears, hopes, and questions to God, He promises to give us His grace, forgiveness, and peace because of His unfailing love for us.