



10

SESSION TEN

The Gospel is for Everyone

SESSION SUMMARY

In this session, you will meet three different people who each had a unique encounter with the gospel and were changed. Through these three encounters, you will recognize that God uses different methods to reach different kinds of people. God calls us to be faithful to deliver His gospel message to all kinds of people, regardless of their past, their appearance, or their present circumstances.

SCRIPTURE

Acts 16:11-34

THE POINT

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

INTRO/STARTER 5-10 MINUTES

Option 1

Have you ever caught yourself “people watching?” Before smart phones, if you wanted to hang out with your friends or family, you would set a time and place and expect people to be there. If you got there before everyone else, you would not take your phone out and check social media, since that did not exist. Instead, you just looked around. If someone did something out of the ordinary, you would notice. If a mother scolded her child for throwing a fit in public, you would look in that direction or slightly to the side, so as to not give the impression that you were eavesdropping. If a couple were on a date, you would try to guess where they were going, the status of their relationship, and if they were a good fit.

Because of smart phones and social media, you might think people watching has turned into a lost art, but that’s not necessarily true. People watching has simply moved from the physical sphere to the digital space. It has become incredibly easy to watch what others are doing by creeping on their social media profiles. Some apps even tell you where someone is every minute of the day.

- **Share a people watching story from your life. Is it possible to know people just by watching them? How much can you really know about them?**

When you people watch—either in person or online—one thing that you will notice is that there so many different people in this world, and each one of them has a unique story. All people hope and find meaning in something. Some find meaning in family; others in work, wealth, or fame. Some find meaning in religion that’s all about doing, works, and self-righteousness. The truth is, while people are different in so many ways, we are all the exact same in other ways. We are all loved by God and need the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Option 2

People learn in different ways, and it’s important for those who teach to understand how to teach different types of people. People are most often categorized as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners. Visual learners understand concepts better when they’re presented in pictures or diagrams. Auditory learners enjoy hearing concepts explained verbally, through words and sounds. Kinesthetic learners are more hands-on, preferring to learn by experience. God created each one of us uniquely, with a unique skill set and way of processing information. So, it would make sense that He provides for all people by revealing Himself and His truth to us in ways that we can understand individually.

- **What type of learner are you?**
- **How did you first learn about God? About what Jesus did for you?**

HIS STORY

15-20 MINUTES

THE POINT

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

CHARACTERS

- **Paul:** also known by his Hebrew name Saul; violent persecutor turned follower and apostle of Christ; known as the missionary to the Gentiles

PLOT

God's intention has always been to take the gospel to the nations. The stories in this session show different ways God gets His message to different types of people, emphasizing once again His desire for all to know Him and be saved.

TIMELINE

SALVATION AVAILABLE TO ALL

The message of the gospel reaches people of different backgrounds.

ENGAGING CULTURE

Paul engages the surrounding culture with the message of Christ.

LIVING ON MISSION

Paul viewed his day-to-day work as an opportunity to spread the gospel.

A BUSINESSWOMAN NAMED LYDIA

Paul seems to have been an outstanding people watcher. He had a strong awareness of the people around him, but he didn't just passively watch—he stepped into their lives no matter the situation. We will first see this in Paul's interaction with a woman named Lydia.

11 So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis,¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days.¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us. (Acts 15:11-15)

The disciples were on a mission. They understood that the gospel was not just for their own benefit—they knew the truth and accepted it, and so they were commissioned to share it with others. That's why they travelled to Macedonia. In fact, in the verses preceding these, the Holy Spirit prevented these disciples from going to Asia to share the gospel (Acts 16:6-7). As a result, Paul received a vision in which a man from Macedonia pled with them to come and help them there (Acts 16:9). This vision was the reason the disciples set sail and ended up in Macedonia. God had a plan for them and He would accomplish His will.

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.

This is when the disciples met a woman named Lydia. One of the reasons—perhaps the only reason—God sent the disciples to Macedonia was so this woman might hear the gospel and be changed! However, this change in Lydia inspired even more change.

The Lord opened up this businesswoman's heart and she accepted the gospel. Then, her entire household was baptized and she invited the disciples to stay with her at her house. This was providential because, after Paul and Silas were imprisoned and released from jail, they went straight to Lydia's house where they met with and encouraged other believers (Acts 16:40). Lydia did not just hear the gospel and walk away; God used her to minister to and bless the disciples.

- **When have you seen the gospel change someone so much that it also affected the people around that person?** (*p. 72, PSG*)

A DEMON POSSESSED SLAVE GIRL

In this next section, the disciples encountered a slave girl who had a special gift—the ability to predict the future. As a result, she was probably on the receiving end of a lot of people watching in those days.

¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. ¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. (Acts 16:16-24)

Paul exercised the authority he had in Jesus and commanded the spirit to leave the slave girl. What should have been a time to celebrate this girl's newfound freedom became an opportunity for her owners to get angry because they lost whatever profits they made through her fortune-telling. Their income had been cast out along with the evil spirit. As a result, her owners dragged Paul and Silas before the city leaders and leveled several charges against them hoping something would stick.

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 wasn't even looking for Him. While this girl might have received a lot of attention in public, she probably frightened most people away from her.

These accounts show two very different people with the very same need—deliverance through Jesus. The slave girl reminds us not to count anyone out and to always be ready to be used by God to meet others' needs, no matter who or what they may be.

A PRISON GUARD

In this last section, we see the importance of faithfulness and being ready to share the gospel in every situation and circumstance, to whomever God places before you.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. (Acts 16:25-34)

Sometimes, God will use large, loud, and unusual circumstances to get our attention. In fact, it's only through experiencing circumstances like these that some people's hearts become postured in a place to re-examine long-held beliefs and convictions.

TIMELINE

**Beginning in Spring 2018*

STANDING STRONG

Refuse compromise when the truth of the gospel is at stake.

UNITY IN THE CROSS

Believers are united together in Christ.

SHOWING MERCY

Those who know mercy show mercy to others.

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.

The encounter with the jailer gives an example of always being ready to respond with the gospel to those who have just experienced the unexpected power of God in their lives. No doubt the jailer began his day expecting yet another normal day of work. Surely, he had no idea how he would see God shake the very foundation of his life, or that he and his entire family would be forever changed.

99 ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

New Identity of the Believer (p. 73, PSG)

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).

CHRIST CONNECTION

The gospel reaches different people in different ways. In Philippi, Paul and Silas saw converts from different social and economic backgrounds come to faith through their witness and testimony. Their message was the same for all: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

YOUR STORY

10-15 MINUTES

GROUP QUESTIONS

God's Story has always been designed to connect with your story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own.

- **What are some things people might be “enslaved” by today? What would it look like for people to be free from what enslaves them?** *Answers may include things like popularity, technology, money, drugs, relationships, and so on.*
- **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?** *We often look past the poor, people who are different from us, our teachers; and so forth.*
- **In what areas of your life do you need to experience freedom?** *Answers will vary.*
- **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?** *They trusted in God and worshiped Him based on who He is and not on their circumstances.*

HIS STORY

God's Story of Redemption, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

YOUR STORY

Where your story meets His.

YOUR MISSION

10-15 MINUTES



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?** *We may feel as if there is more impact and better use of our time, or we may feel more important if the crowd is bigger, and so on.*
- **In what ways are both types of ministry important?** *Large groups can be strategic because more people hear at once, but individual ministry is more discipleship focused, capable of addressing personal issues of growth with a specific individual.*



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?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Why is this important?** *Like Paul and Silas singing and praising God in their terrible circumstances, our actions should be reflective of our inner faith and dependence upon God. Living this way isn't intended to draw attention to ourselves but to the faithfulness of God and the joy found in Him.*



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?** *Answers will vary.*
- **Who are you burdened to share the good news with this week?** *Answers will vary.*

▶ ADDITIONAL INFO

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following additional resources:

- **Leader Training Videos**
- **One Conversations**
- **Midweek Studies (to access your Midweek Study, go to lifeway.com/TGPMissionWin18)**
- **Circular Timeline Poster**
- **App (for both leader and student)**



Additional suggestions for specific groups are available at

GospelProject.com/AdditionalResources

And for ***free online training*** on how to lead a group visit

MinistryGrid.com/web/TheGospelProject