

**“Women of the Bible” (#1)**  
**“LYDIA”**

During the month of May, we will study a new series of lesson on Women of the Bible.

Lydia was the first recorded Christian convert of Paul’s European evangelism campaign. It occurred on Paul’s second missionary trip (**Acts 15:36-18:22**) about (**50AD**).

Paul and Barnabas had planned to revisit the churches of Asia Minor established on the first missionary trip (Acts 15:36). However a dispute arose over taking John Mark, who had quit on the first trip. Paul did not want to take him and Barnabas wanted to continue training him. Therefore Barnabas and Paul split forming two missionary teams. Paul took Silas and went on the second missionary trip to revisit the churches from the first trip. (Acts 15:36-41; Rom.8:28)

However, God had other plans for Paul and his missionary team. This is a reminder of the importance of consistent walking by means of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:16-17). After revisiting the churches of Asia Minor, Paul wanted to evangelize the region of Bithynia but Lord closed the door (Acts 16:9-12).

But at the same time, He opens another door to evangelize Macedonia (Acts 16:6-12). During this missionary trip, Timothy and Luke joined Paul and Silas travelling seminary (Acts 16:1-3; 16:10; 20:5-6).

During this trip, Paul evangelized a woman named Lydia; who was instrumental in establishing the first European Christian Church in her home (Acts 16:15, 40).

<b>This lesson will study four aspects of Lydia: First European Christian Convert.</b>
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**1. Upon reaching Philippi, the Pauline evangelism team began looking for open door opportunities for the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:13-16).**

(Col.4:1-4) **“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; Praying** at the same time for us as well, **that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that** we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; **that I** may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.”

One of our evangelists, now in the presence of the Lord, Chuck Farmer called it finding a fishing hole of unbelievers (**Mark 1:17**). Paul was called by Lord to go to Philippi of Macedonia to evangelize it (Acts 16:8-12; 1 Cor.12:5; Eph.4:11-13).

In Philippi, Paul began looking for open doors in individuals, groups, synagogues, prisons, and market places. He spent several days looking and praying for open doors (Acts 16:12-13).

**2. Paul found a group of ladies meeting on the Sabbath for prayer outside the city at the Gangites River (Acts 16:13). (Paul had found a fishing hole at the River Gangites).**

Emperor Claudius blamed the Jews for creating a religious disturbance and expelled Jews from Rome. Many relocated in Philippi, a leading colony of Rome (Acts 16:13, 20-21; 18:2).

As a result, Jews were not permitted to assemble for worship within the city limits. Therefore, they were meeting outside the city.

We learn six things about this group of ladies assembled (Acts 16:13)

- Meeting on the Sabbath day tells us they were seeking monotheism in a polytheistic culture.
- God Consciousness is essential for gospel hearing (Rom.1:16-20).
- God will bring unbelievers with positive volition to the gospel or take the gospel to them (2 Pet.3:9).
- There was a mixture of Jewish and Gentile women converts to Judaism.
- They spoke trilingual languages of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Paul spoke all three.
- There were no men present in this meeting.

### **3. The Lord's "open door" gave the Pauline team in an opportunity to evangelize.**

- To present a clear gospel (1 Cor.15:3-4).
- To present a clear invitation to grace salvation (Rom.1:16/ believe; Eph.2:8-9/ faith and grace).
- To present a clear eternal life promise to a believer (John 10:28-30; 1 John 5:11-13).

Paul has a great ministry with this group of ladies outside the city. **You are spiritually prepared to handle whatever happens in that open door opportunity (2 Tim.4:5; 2 Cor.5:18-21).**

The very next open door opportunity in the city resulted in Paul and Silas being put in the Philippi prison (Acts 16:16-24; 1 Cor.10:13; Rom.8:28).

**So Paul went fishing in prison (Acts 16:23-29); and the Lord opened another door to evangelism in prison.** The Jailor and his family were saved (Acts 16:30-40).

### **4. Lydia was the only recorded convert from this first prayer meeting evangelism.**

As a result of the Pauline team discipleship training she and her household along with the Jailor and his family started the Church of Philippi (Matt.28:18-20; Acts 16:33-34; Phil.4:15).

We learn six things about **Lydia and her conversion.**

- She was a successful business woman of a high end dyed fabrics.
- She was a convert to Judaism (monotheistic) [Positive Volition (PV) at God Consciousness (GC)].
- She was from Thyatira of Asia Minor but missed Paul's first evangelism trip to it.
- Because of PV at GC, God brought her and Paul together in Philippi on second M.E.T.
- **The Lord opened her heart** through PV at GC to believe the gospel of grace salvation (Acts 16:14). Notice that **she didn't open** her heart to invite Jesus into it (Vice versa; 2 Cor.4:6) – She believe!
- Luke was left to give them discipleship training (Acts 20:6; 16:13) [us] (1 Pet.2:2; Heb.5:13-14).

## **LYDIA: THE FIRST EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN CONVERT**