

Acts 16:25-30 NLT - 25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! 27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. 28 But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

prisoners, this was an authentic expression of their faith, directed to God, and the others overheard them. They were witnesses by the example of their lives. Have you found any situations to be challenging to express your faith outside of a church setting? Has anyone ever recognized your faith that you didn't even realize was watching you?

How did Paul and Silas demonstrate mercy to the jailer in verse 28? The jailer responded to an authentic expression of faith and God's mercy in the lives of Paul and Silas. Our lives are a witness to those around us too.

WRAP-UP

Each of us has a mission field. Every day there are people who cross our path that need to know Jesus, and we can share Him with them. But the way we do this will be unique depending on those involved. Perhaps we bring the truth of God through sharing God's word, or we bring the kingdom of Light into a dark situation, or maybe we simply live out our faith in our daily lives. In whatever way you do it, let your light shine.

Memory Verse

In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. - Matthew 5:16 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge- Ask God to show you who it is in your life that needs to hear the Good News this week.

“Where’s Your Mission Field?”

INTRODUCTION

This weekend Pastor Billy Graham Paulose visited New Life. Pastor Billy is a minister in his home country of India. He has been tremendously effective in bringing the good news of Jesus to his country, despite facing strong opposition. Most of us won't be called to a faraway land to share the gospel, but each of us has a mission field of our own. Let's use the formation of the church in Philippi as an example of how Paul was effective in bringing the gospel to his mission field, a diverse population who became the church of Philippi.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

What is the farthest you have traveled from home?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Where are you called?

Acts 16:6-10 NLT - 6 Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time. 7 Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there. 8 So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. 9 That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" 10 So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

Finding the place and the people God calls us to can be a challenge. Paul and Silas didn't start out to minister in Macedonia. How did they conclude that Macedonia was the place they should go? Have you ever thought that you knew what you were supposed to do but somehow it became impossible? Perhaps it was a move, a job, or a relationship that just never materialized. If so, to what did you attribute your inability to follow your plan? Have you ever thought that God closed a door to you?

God hemmed in Paul and Silas in order to get them to the place of their calling. What if God has brought you to a specific place- your work, your school, or your neighborhood, for a specific calling? If so you may have

some unique opportunities to share the gospel. Who would you say are the people in your circle of friends or acquaintances, that you see regularly, who might not know the Lord yet? Have you considered, or have you already, shared Jesus with them?

Unique Opportunities – Unique Approaches

When we encounter those who don't follow Jesus, we want to be a witness to them, however, not every situation calls for exactly the same approach. Paul and Silas had three very different experiences with those in the area of Philippi. They approached each opportunity uniquely. We will have many opportunities to share Jesus with those around us. Let's look at the ways Paul brought Jesus into three unique situations.

Acts 16:13-15 NLT - 13 On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. 14 One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. 15 She was baptized along with other members of her household, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.

Lydia

After arriving in the region of Macedonia, Paul and Silas went looking for a prayer meeting. They found what they were looking for; "God-worshippers", including Lydia, gathered by the river. You may have assumed that everyone in the church is already a believer. But that might not be the case.

How would you differentiate between a church attender and a follower of Christ? What do you think are some of the challenges of moving from being an "attender" to a "follower"? How was Lydia persuaded to become a follower of Jesus?

Some people we encounter may already have a softened heart. As Paul spoke the truth to the women at the prayer meeting, Lydia listened and accepted what he said. We should not neglect speaking God's truth, even among fellow church-goers. You never know who may be poised to accept the Lord, they might sit next to you in church.

The Slave Girl

Paul and Silas visited the place of prayer on many occasions. In the passage below, we see that a slave girl who was demon-possessed followed them for days. As she followed, she screamed out or shrieked that they were, in fact, declaring the way of salvation. Even though that was the truth, it wasn't the way Paul wanted it proclaimed. Pastor Billy has related similar stories about his encounters with people in India who were demon-possessed. You might think this is irrelevant to us, but did you know even in Pismo Beach we have a psychic fortune telling business less than 3 miles from the church?

Acts 16:16-18 NLT - 16 One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a demon-possessed slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. 17 She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved." 18 This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her.

It doesn't say Paul preached to the girl, nor does it say he prayed for the girl. How did he approach this situation? In what ways is this similar to Jesus' encounter with the demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes (below). In both of these instances the kingdom of God encountered the kingdom of darkness through power, by a direct command. Why do you think preaching the truth of Jesus to this girl might not be effective?

During the Halloween season we may see a rise in occult activities. Have you ever had what you would characterize as an encounter with darkness?

Mark 5:1, 6-8 NLT - 1 So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes. ... 6 When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. 7 With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit."

The Jailer

Even from their dark jail cell Paul and Silas brought the light of Jesus. What were they doing around midnight? They weren't addressing the