

# The Lord Plants His Church in Philippi

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at [Christchurcheastbay.org](http://Christchurcheastbay.org). Good morning.

My name is Carrie Moulton and I'm a member of the Greeters. The New Testament lesson today is a reading from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 16, verses 9 through 34 and verse 60.

During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, come over to Macedonia and help us.

After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. From Troas, we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace.

[ 1 : 16 ] And the next day, we went on to Neapolis. From there, we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

One of those listening was a woman from the city of Theatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house. And she persuaded us. Once, when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

[ 2 : 22 ] She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, These men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved. She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.

At that moment, the spirit left her. When her owners realized that their hopes of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

They brought them before the magistrates and said, These men are Jews and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.

The crowd joined in the attack against Silas and Paul, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.

When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

[ 3 : 36 ] Suddenly, there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. All at once, the prison doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose.

The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he threw his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, Don't harm yourself. We're all here. The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell, trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

They replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in the house.

At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. Then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them. [ 4 : 42 ] He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God, he and his whole household. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them.

Then they left. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. All right, good morning. Before I forget, we have a rose on our communion table to celebrate that Frankie and Jesse had their baby, a baby Nina.

And so we praise God for the gift of new life. So when we agreed to help plant a new church in Berkeley about 20 years ago, one of the questions we asked ourselves is, what would be the easiest place to plant a church in the United States of America?

America? Where would people be most receptive to the message of the gospel? Where would have the least hard and rocky soil and the most fertile and soft and receptive soil to plant a new church that could send down roots and grow?

Well, you may be aware that 20 years ago, and even still, it's the case that the San Francisco Bay Area is the number one. It's at the very top of the list of the least religious, most unchurched metro areas of the United States.

[ 6 : 19 ] And before us today is this story about the Apostle Paul, who went to a very unpromising place where there are actually no Christians. And he planted a church among the most unlikely people.

He goes to this city in northern Greece. The gospel had never gone into Greece. And he goes to northern Greece knowing that he's entering a culture that's every bit as resistant, every bit as unsympathetic to the claims of Jesus as our culture is.

And if you think that Berkeley is not a promising place for the gospel, Philippi is way harder, right? I've never been, you know, the victim of a violent mob. I've never been beaten.

I've never been thrown into jail. And you may be like, well, if you and Andrew were a little bit more like the Apostle Paul, right, you might get a little bit more resistance and opposition. Now, that's a fair point.

I'm reminded of an old pastor. He said, everywhere the Apostle Paul went, there was either a riot or a revival. But everywhere I go, they serve tea and cookies. So what's up with that?

[ 7 : 27 ] But we need to know the origin story of this church because over the coming weeks and months, we're going to be looking at the letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to this church in Philippi.

And today we're taking a look at these three transformation stories of the first converts that made up this new church plant in the city of Philippi. Three very different people.

Lydia, the slave girl, and the jailer, who had three very different encounters with the gospel. All of them resulted in the changed lives of these individuals, but also in the changed relationships of their families and of the community of that living and flourishing church that began there.

And so three wonderful case studies of how God changes us, of how God transforms us. And I want to talk about them under these three headings.

The intellectual and gospel truth, the oppressed and gospel power, and the pragmatic and gospel life.

[ 8 : 33 ] Okay, so the intellectual and gospel truth, the oppressed and gospel power, the pragmatic and gospel life. Let's start with the intellectual and gospel truth. We're told in verse 13 that Paul and Silas, they go outside of the city gate on the Sabbath, whereas there's this kind of outdoor open air synagogue where women are gathered to pray and read the Bible.

And as an aside, if the apostle Paul were as patriarchal and as misogynistic as many people interpret him to be, I guess the question is, wouldn't he have turned around at this point? Wouldn't he have gone and searched for some men? But he doesn't do that. In fact, it's through this group of women that the gospel enters into Europe for the first time. And in verse 13, we're told that Paul sat down and he began to speak with these women.

And I imagine Paul asking them, hey, what are you learning from the Bible? And in this conversational kind of Q&A, this give and take back and forth, this just little dialogue that they're having, Paul is reasoning with them through his exposition of the scriptures.

And we're told that this woman, Lydia, is listening intently to Paul's message. Now, who is Lydia? Lydia, we're told in verse 14, it says that she's from the city of Thyatira.

[ 9 : 52 ] She's a dealer in purple cloth and she's a worshiper of God. So city of Thyatira, that's over in Asia Minor. That's over in Turkey, which means that she's cosmopolitan. She's multicultural.

She travels back and forth for business between Turkey and Greece. She's also a dealer in purple cloth, which is an expensive luxury good for rich people.

This means that Lydia is a savvy entrepreneur. She's a successful businesswoman. She runs a high-end boutique and sells beautiful things to beautiful people, which means that she's quite wealthy.

And we know that because she has a home that is large. It's large enough to host lots of people. And then it says that she's a worshiper of God, which is kind of a technical term that refers to Gentile people who become dissatisfied with their pagan polytheism.

Right, she knew that something was missing. She knew that there was more to life than what she had and she became disenchanted with her Greco-Roman lifestyle and she became attracted to the God of the Bible and she began to worship Israel's God, this God of love, this God of high moral ideals.

[ 11 : 08 ] So how did the gospel come to Lydia? Well, she's this amazing woman. She's admirable. She's smart. She's self-disciplined. She's successful. She's put together. She's a spiritual seeker.

She worships the God of the Bible, but that's not enough. Right, she needs the gospel. And verse 14 says that she's listening intently to Paul's message and that the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

So what was the message? Maybe you remember a couple weeks back when Jesus rose from the dead and that Sunday afternoon, he went on a walk with some disciples and he gave them the world's greatest Bible study.

You remember that? And it says that as they were walking, he talked them through the law and the prophets and the Psalms. He talked them through the whole story of the Hebrew Bible. And he said, didn't the Messiah have to suffer all these things and then enter his glory?

And Jesus on that Easter Sunday, the resurrected Jesus, he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. Well, that's what Paul's doing with Lydia. Right, Paul's just simply walking her through that same Easter Sunday resurrected Jesus Bible study.

[ 12 : 21 ] And he's telling her all about the kingdom of God and the covenants of God. All about the promises that God had made to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

The promises that he made to Moses and the promises he made to David and through the prophets. And he says, all of those promises that God made, God has kept. And he's fulfilled them all in Jesus.

And he basically says, look, everything you've been learning about the Bible, it all is a signpost pointing to Jesus. Every true prophet, every faithful priest, every hero, every lamb, every sacrifice, every king, every suffering servant, every majestic Lord, all of it is pointing you to the God who came in the flesh and who was crucified and resurrected.

Now here is Lydia, this amazing woman, and she's listening to Paul's message, this woman whose business is beauty, this woman who sells beautiful things to beautiful people.

And I imagine Paul told her, he said, you know, when Jesus was on the way to the cross, they put a crown of thorns on him. And you know what they wrapped around him? They put a purple robe on Jesus to mock him as a king.

[ 13 : 42 ] But you see, the beauty of this king is that he gave up all of his beauty. He gave up all of his glory to take the curse of sin and death that was on you and to take it on to himself in order that he might take the blessing that was rightfully his, right?

The one that he earned through his righteous life of love, that he might put that blessing on you, that he might wrap that beautiful robe of his perfect righteousness around you, Lydia.

And you said, when she heard that, it says the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. And that word, responds, means that she was attracted to it.

She was attracted to something beautiful. She didn't just believe it. She wasn't just convinced by it. But this woman whose business was beauty was attracted to the beautiful truth of the gospel that she heard from Paul and she had never found anything of such beauty.

And the Lord opened her heart, which is the only way that we can be changed, right? For this sovereign God to come and divinely intervene and to take a heart that's closed and to make it open.

[ 14 : 59 ] To take a heart that's hard and to make it soft. To take a heart that's resistant and make it receptive. To change our heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh.

Right? And none of us would have been attracted to the beautiful truth of Jesus unless God had enabled us and unless we had been regenerated in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Unless God had given us the gift of repentance and faith. And that's what Lydia receives and that's why she's baptized as a sign that her sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus as a symbol that she's been buried with Christ and raised with Him to live in the newness of life.

It says in verse 15 that when she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. She said, if you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house. And she persuaded us.

You see, once our hearts are opened, our home and our resources are open too. Right? As a tangible expression of her new life in Jesus, she invites these missionaries into her home.

[ 16 : 09 ] She says, what's mine is yours for as long and as much as you need it. And in verse 40, we're told that she became the host of that new church plant in her home.

She says, I want my home to serve as a center for ministry. So she demonstrated the root of her faith through the fruit of her generosity by sacrificially giving her home and her resources and her time that she might honor the beauty of Christ and might build up the beauty of the church.

Friends, when we think about the many people like Lydia here in the Bay Area, the many people like Lydia that are somehow by God's design connected to our lives, when we think about all the people we know who they sense that something's missing in their life.

Right? They're disenchanted with what they currently have. They know there's more than this.

They're disillusioned by the radical secularity and the hyper-individualism of the Bay Area.

They're disillusioned by their dabbling in Buddhism or Islam. All the DIY spirituality and all the partisan politics that consistently over-promises and under-delivers.

[ 17 : 34 ] they need our prayers. They need us to pray. Our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers need for us to pray because they are longing for a beautiful truth, the truth of the gospel that they don't yet know that they need.

And they need us to pray for God to show it to them. Right? That they might be put in relationships and circumstances and opportunities that they too can hear that message of the gospel and that the Lord would do what only He can do which is to open up their hearts to the gospel.

Does that make sense? This is how a church gets planted, right? Because you've got intellectual people who need to hear gospel truth. But then also there's the oppressed!

The oppressed and gospel power! The oppressed and gospel power! The second case study of transformation is this slave girl who's basically a street kid and she's got tons of trauma that's creating lots of drama.

Okay? And verse 16 says that once we were going to the place of prayer and we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future and she earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling.

[ 18 : 53 ] This girl is tragically oppressed. She's oppressed relationally and emotionally because either her parents have died or they've been so desperately in debt that they sold her into slavery.

And she's oppressed economically and socially because her quote unquote owners are involved in a business that exploits girls for money.

Have you ever heard of this? It happens today. And she's oppressed spiritually and morally because she's not filled with the Holy Spirit of the living God.

She's filled with a dark spirit. She's controlled by a dark power that enables her to tell fortunes and predict the future. And if you think this is just first century stuff, this is a multi-billion dollar industry today and it's growing.

She, these dark powers cause her to fall into trances and speak in strange voices. she's just a deeply broken person and a deeply broken system. And Paul sees her and he's troubled, right?

[ 20 : 04 ] He's troubled by all that's oppressing her and this city. And it says in verse 17 that she followed Paul and the rest of us shouting, these men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved.

And she kept us up for many days and finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and spoke to the Spirit. Now why was Paul annoyed?

Why was he troubled? Well for pagans the Most High God is who? It's Zeus. Right? And there's actually in the Greek there's no definite article that says, hey these guys, these servants of the Most High God are telling you that, they're telling you the way to be saved.

For pagan ears they would have just heard, you know, the Most High God, Zeus, these servants are just telling you a kind of way to have health and wealth and prosperity.

That's what everybody was hearing this girl say. And isn't it confusing, right? Are we talking about the one creator God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Are we talking about the gods of Mount Olympus?

[ 21 : 10 ] Are we talking about Jesus just being a kind of new God added to the pantheon who's come to minimize our pain and maximize our pleasure, like all the Greek philosophical systems that were on order, the Epicureans, for example?

Is Jesus just a way and a truth and a life one of many possible legitimate paths by which we come to God the Father? See, this is why Paul is disturbed, right?

Because these dark powers are not only oppressing this girl, but they're oppressing the people of the city by introducing confusion about the message of the gospel. This girl, what she needs is she does not need a reasoned exposition of biblical truth the way that Lydia, the spiritual seeker, needed.

Right? This girl is not a spiritual seeker. She's spiritually hostile. And how does the gospel come to this girl? You see, what she needs is she needs power.

She needs a power to come from outside of her. She needs a power to come inside of her and to drive out all that's dark, all those dark powers, all those dark spirits, and to replace them with the power of God.

[ 22 : 34 ] And so Paul turns around and it says in verse 18 that he said, not to the girl, but to the spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her. And when that happened it says that at that moment the spirit left her.

She experienced the power of the gospel, she experienced the power of Jesus, and she was converted. She became the second member of the church in Philippi. And some of us say, well, Jonathan, we're too educated for this.

You know, we're a little too sophisticated. We know that this isn't really how the world works. And I get that, but I wonder if most of us have been miseducated.

I wonder if people that we trusted to teach us about the world, they didn't really tell us about the complexity and the depth and the extent and the reality of evil.

And I wonder if sometimes we're just naive. If there are some things that sociology and psychology and science just simply cannot account for.

[ 23 : 50 ] And you see, it's not just about people like this girl who are obviously broken, but even people who do not look deeply broken on the outside. People that we know, maybe even some of us, we're often more controlled by forces and enslaved by spirits and oppressed by powers and exploited by systems than we even realize.

People that look fine on the outside are very often on the inside, they're addicted, right? They're addicted to work and career and money. People are on the inside, they're addicted to technology and entertainment that has a hold of them.

They're addicted to pleasure and consumption, they're addicted to sex and substances, and maybe you can relate to that addiction. Whatever you live for, that's the thing that's controlling you.

Whatever you live for, that's your real master. You are a servant servant to that power. And you see, this slave girl doesn't just need the gospel truth that came to Lydia, though she does need that.

She needs the gospel power of a new master, the gospel power of a new lord. She needs the gospel power of the only one who can really come and break through the power of her slavery and liberate her from all of those deep and complex layers of oppression and set her free.

[ 25 : 15 ] And this question is, have you been set free? Or are you oppressed? Are you bound up in problems that are beyond your ability to deal with?

Do you find yourself, if you're honest, are you addicted to fear and worry and anger? Are you addicted to work and alcohol and sex?

Are you addicted to past hurts and resentments and regrets and sheer unforgiveness that you cannot break free from? You see, what you need, if that's you, what you need is for someone to pray in the name of Jesus for all of that to come out.

Right? So that God's love, the love of God the Father can come in. And the grace of Jesus can come in and the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit can come in. Amen. That's what people need.

Right? So we're talking about the intellectual and gospel truth, but we're also talking about the oppressed and gospel power. You with me? Just blink, nod your head. All right.

[ 26 : 25 ] Last thing is, we get this amazing picture of the pragmatic and gospel life. Right? This third case study of transformation is a jailer who's most likely an ex-Roman soldier.

He's not an intellectual like Lydia who mainly needs gospel truth and a reasoned conversation about the Bible. He's not this oppressed slave girl who mainly needs gospel power and Jesus-focused, spirit-filled prayer.

What is this guy? This is just a dude. Right? What does this pragmatic guy mainly need? Right? This battle-hardened war veteran, he's not spiritually seeking, neither is he spiritually hostile, he just is spiritually indifferent.

He doesn't care. Typical guy. What does he need? What he needs is to see how the gospel applies to real life.

Right? Because when Jesus set that girl free, Jesus also set her owners free of all the money they were making off of her. And when people are set free from their money, they're not really happy, are they?

[ 27 : 37 ] So they go and they, you know, they use some like racially prejudiced, anti-Semitic rhetoric to stir up a violent mob. And what happens?

Paul and Silas are stripped, they're beaten within an inch of their lives, and they're put in jail. And we're told that this jailer is cruel to them. This jailer is unkind to them.

Right? He puts them in this inner cell where there's no light and there's fetid air. He abuses them by stretching out their feet and putting them in stocks. And you can imagine, they're cold, they're hungry, they're thirsty, their wounds are festering, they're in severe pain.

And verse 25, about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners were listening to them. You see, the jailer needs to see how the gospel practically can change your life.

How the gospel can give you a joy that's deeper than your suffering. How they can take away your comfort, they can take away your money, you can lose your work, you can lose your health, but you can still praise God.

[ 28 : 49 ] What are they singing? They're singing the Psalms. They're singing the hymn book of the Bible. Right? They're singing all those Psalms about the Messiah who was rejected but will be vindicated.

They're singing all of those great hymns of the New Testament. Colossians 1, Philippians 2, Revelation 4 and 5 about the person and the work of the Lamb who was slaughtered and yet is standing.

Right? Who was humiliated and yet he's exalted. They're singing all these amazing hymns and the question is when we are stranded in the dark, maybe not in a prison, but when we're stranded and you will be stranded when your car breaks down, when you find yourself in the emergency room, when your family member is sick, when someone you love dies, what are you singing in the dark? What hymns are we going to sing? One of the things we want to do here is just provide you every week with hymns that you can sing at midnight. Right? We think about that.

Like what do we want you to be singing when you're at your worst? What songs can you sing to say, you know, even so it is well with my soul.

[ 30 : 12 ] And so here they are, they're singing and why are they singing? Well, Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, he says when we sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we're actually doing two things simultaneously.

We're singing to God and we're singing to each other. Right? We sing to God with gratitude and we make melody to him in our hearts, but we're also teaching and admonishing one another with the gospel.

You see, when our brothers and our sisters are discouraged, as surely Paul and Silas were discouraged, then our songs can actually strengthen our brother and encourage our sister.

And these prisoners hear this, they hear Paul and Silas when they should be cursing God, when they should be complaining to each other. No, what they hear is they're praising God and they're

encouraging each other.

When they see and they hear the gospel embodied in the real lives of these men who are blessing God and who are building each other up, man, they're shaken. And then what happens is that the creator God sends an earthquake and then they're really shaken.

[ 31 : 19 ] Right? Because God allows us to be shaken up by current events so that we wake up to his reality. And so this jailer thinks that his life is over because his prisoners are escaping and when your prisoners escape, you're going to die as a jailer.

They're going to kill you. Right? And here's this honorable soldier. He says, I'm going to preserve my honor by doing it before the executioners do it to me. And Paul says, stop.

We haven't escaped. In fact, we kept all the prisoners from escaping. And it says in verse 29, I love this story. The jailer called for lights.

He rushed in. He fell trembling before Paul and Silas. And he then brought them out and asked, sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they replied, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.

And then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and all the others in his house. And what I imagine they told him in that moment is, hey, Jesus, Jesus was beaten like we were beaten.

[ 32 : 26 ] And Jesus was bound like we were bound. But Jesus went way beyond that. He was nailed to the cross. Right? And he could have saved himself. He could have escaped.

He could have procured his own freedom. He could have prayed and had an army of angels come down. But he didn't do that. He didn't allow himself to be rescued.

But he went into the deepest and the darkest suffering to save us. He lost his life in order to save our life. And what they say to the jailer is, look, the reason that we did not get our freedom at the expense of your life is because we have already gotten our freedom at the expense of Jesus' life. And the reason we did not respond to your cruelty with cruelty and your abuse with abuse and your unkindness with unkindness, the reason we did not walk out of this prison and leave you to die is because Jesus didn't leave us.

Jesus didn't walk out on us. Jesus, in his mercy and in his forgiveness, he saved us. And that's why we've done what we've done for you. And the jailer has never seen a life live like this.

[ 33 : 43 ] He's been living in a culture where you repay evil with evil. And he sees this gospel life where you actually overcome evil with good.

And he sees that, wow, they have something that I don't have but that I want. They have a gospel life that is unflappable and poised.

They have a gospel life that is enabling them to somehow sing with joy and peace in the midst of suffering. They have a gospel life that is enabling them to love sacrificially and to suffer willingly for people they don't even know that they might be blessed and have life.

And so for this practical dude, for this pragmatic jailer, he says, if I can have that kind of embodied gospel life, then I can face anything.

And so he says, what must I do to get it? And I'm sure they told him what Paul writes in Romans 10. If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[ 34 : 54 ] And the jailer did exactly that. He repented and he believed. And verse 33 says, at that hour of the night, the jailer took them and he washed their wounds.

And then immediately he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them. He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God. He and his whole household.

And here's this tough guy who now commits himself to the ministry of caring for the weak and the wounded and the needy. Here's this tough guy who's now over here committing himself to community and the breaking of bread with a new family.

Here is this man who has been baptized, buried with Jesus, raised with him to walk in the newness of life, filled with the love and the joy and the peace of the Holy Spirit.

And why is he so full of joy? Because now he can live that gospel life that enables you to sing in the dark. He can live that gospel life that enables you to overcome evil with good.

[ 36 : 05 ] See, the gospel, when you look at the differences between Lydia and the slave girl and the jailer, we see that the gospel is for everyone.

And that means that we can't look at anybody in our lives and say that person could never become a Christian. Right? They're a woman or they're a man. Right? They're young or they're old or they're middle-aged.

No, you can't say that. Here's wealthy Lydia. Here's this poor slave girl. Here's this middle-class jailer.

Here's people at the center of society and people out on the margins of society. Here's this immigrant, Lydia, this immigrant from Asia Minor and this slave girl who's a resident of Greece and this Roman soldier who came from the far reaches of the Roman Empire.

And that means the gospel is for everybody. It doesn't matter where you're coming from. Latino, African, Asian, European, Middle Eastern. It doesn't matter. Here's this market-oriented, white-collar businesswoman, Lydia.

[ 37 : 13 ] And here is this state-oriented, blue-collar military guy, the jailer. And here's this slave girl who's just checked out completely. It doesn't matter if you vote for the red team or the blue team or no team.

Here's this woman who's spiritually seeking, Lydia. This woman who's spiritually hostile, the girl. This guy who's spiritually indifferent, the jailer. Here's this woman who's spiritually hostile, the gospel. Here's this woman who's spiritually hostile, the gospel.

The gospel is for everybody. The gospel transcends all of our differences. And because the gospel transcends all these categories that our culture wants to divide us on, where our culture sorts us out by all of our differences, the gospel enables us to have a unity in the church where there's division out in the broader culture.

Without the gospel, none of these people would have cared at all about each other. They would have despised each other. They would have looked down on each other with criticism and contempt.

But now they're a church. Now they're the family of God. Now they are one in Jesus. Now they are all filled with the same spirit.

[ 38 : 27 ] And it says in verse 40, when Paul goes back to meet with that new church plant, there was gathered there in Lydia's house. I'm confident that he encouraged these sisters and these brothers.

And he said to them, look, keep on being different. Keep on being an alternative counterculture. Keep seeking unity across all of your differences.

Keep being for the city. And by all means, keep reaching out to all the people that God has put into your life with gospel truth and gospel power and gospel life.

And I pray that God will enable us to continue to do that here at Christ Church in Berkeley as well. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.