

Open Hearts Open Homes

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[0:00] Hi, and I'm thinking, yeah, after about the third time I said that, they looked at me funny, and I was telling them, yes, yes, yes. So we had very little words that we could share with one another, but this older couple welcomed us in to their home. They cooked some great meals for us.

I know they went a little bit overboard like we normally do sometimes with special guests and cooked a seven-course meal, and they treated me, and then later when Catherine came back with me, treated us like family. They made us feel truly at home. Well, except for the tatami mats on the floor where we had to sleep, that wasn't quite like home. And then there was a young couple who, when we were in a different city, who welcomed me into their home, and they had two small children, and along with all the laughter and the chaos that goes along with having young children, they welcomed me into their home and just showed great hospitality. You know, their kindness and openness made a lasting impression on me. As a matter of fact, we stayed in contact for a number of years after that, and their experience, or that experience, reminds me a little bit about what we're going to be looking at this morning in Acts chapter 16 and verses 11 through verse 15 this morning. So we're going to explore what happens when God opens our hearts to the gospel.

What are some of the changes that He brings about in our life, and what are the results of those changes He makes? Acts chapter 16, as Luke is writing this in verse number 11, Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony.

And we were staying in that city for some days. These gentlemen who were on this second, what came to be called the second missionary journey, had planned on going to different cities.

But God had changed their plans, and He said, no, don't go here. Well, they tried to go. They started going to a different city, and God said, no, you can't go there. And then they tried to go to a different place, and then ultimately God gave Paul, the Apostle Paul, a vision of a man from over in the place called Macedonia, over in Europe. And He says, come, we need your help. So God closed a few doors, and then God opened a door and showed Paul and his cohorts where they needed to go. And so now, immediately, Scripture said in the previous verse, that they left, and they left on their way to Macedonia. Verse 11, they sailed from Troas, and it took them two days to get to the coast of where they were wanting to go. Obviously, they had favorable winds, because Scripture tells us later in Acts that on the return journey back to Troas, it took them five days. So the winds weren't quite as in their favor on their way home. The Troas to Philippi was a 130-mile journey by sea. It was broken up by two stops. They stopped first, verse 11 says, in Samothrace. That was one of the islands. Matter of fact, the Greek called it Poseidon's Island. It had a very high elevation on it, actually even higher than the city of Denver, the mile-high city. And it overlooked the sea, overlooked the Aegean Sea around them. And then the next day, Luke says, they arrived at a place called Neapolis. That was a port city. And then Philippi was 10 miles inland. So here they are, they're walking, they're traveling, they are traveling via this road, and they get to Philippi. And Luke says, it was a foremost city of that part of Macedonia. It says here that they were a colony.

[4:27] By the way, Philippi was a Roman colony. And the way the emperors did it is when they would conquer different cities, sometimes they would go across the sea and conquer a city somewhere. What they did was they voluntold people to go and to settle there. And most of them were retired military personnel.

And they would go and settle. This was a Rome away from Rome. And as an incentive, they would keep, they wouldn't have to pay taxes. And so it'd be, and there are countries that do this today. You've probably seen where there are some countries that will say, you move here and we'll pay you \$10,000 just to move to our little part of the world. Why? Because there's not enough people and they want more and they want the economy to be improved. And so this was a colony, a

Roman colony that they were going to. And, excuse me, Philippi was a strategic commercial location. They had gold mines.

They had a lot of business there. It was said that they had a prominent medical school there in Philippi. And some Bible scholars tell us that they believe that that's where Luke grew up. And potentially, Luke went to medical school in Philippi, because that's why he calls it a prominent city in that area, excuse me, of Macedonia. And here they are. They moved from where they intended to be. They were planning on going again throughout Asia or their portion of what was called Asia, modern day Turkey. And then they end up in Europe in a place called Philippi. This is verse 13. And they stayed there for some days.

And on the Sabbath day, Luke says, we went out of the city to the riverside where prayer was customarily made. And we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Paul and his friends didn't immediately jump into evangelizing the city. It says they stayed a few days there. They may have needed to rest. They may have needed to organize their plans. Even though they knew that's where God wanted them to be, they took their time. Sometimes it's not enough to know where God wants us to work.

[7:07] We must also know when and how he wants us to work. So they took their time, strategized a bit. And as was their way of doing things on the Sabbath day, they would typically find a synagogue to go to.

But there was no synagogue in Philippi. And what this tells us, there was probably a very small Jewish population. Jewish law stated that in order to begin a synagogue, there had to be 10 male leaders or 10 male congregants to begin a synagogue. So they probably didn't even have 10 Jewish men to be able to start this synagogue. So instead, what happened in areas where there was no synagogue, the Jewish followers of God would tend to go by the water or the water's edge. And everyone knew that that's typically where they gathered. So Paul and his friends, his fellow missionaries find their way, and then they find these women. So instead, they head to the river, commonplace for prayer gatherings. And they find this group of women praying. I find it a little bit interesting that it was a man from Macedonia that called them over. But Paul began speaking to women. Paul, by the way, by some today would have tended to say that Paul didn't place women very high.

They might have called Paul a misogynist or just a fancy way of saying that he put women down or didn't, thought women had their place and they shouldn't be prominent and they would be at home raising kids and should not say anything and just let the men do their thing, which to a degree, God says there is an order, if you will. As a matter of fact, it was women were so put down in this time that rabbis, there was a particular rabbi that was known to have said, it is better for the word of God to be burned than to be delivered to a woman. That's pretty harsh. So what Paul does is he doesn't go to the prominent leading members of society. He goes to the riverside and he starts talking with a group of women who were gathered there. It says that where prayer was customarily made, we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. This word for spoke is the normal Greek word for a conversation. We sat down and we made conversation. Luke doesn't hear, says that they share the gospel, but I think it's pretty common sense that he says, well, you know what, if they trusted Christ, they must have shared the gospel. And so they're talking to these women, most likely about Jesus. They were discussing spiritual matters. You know, sometimes we expect to find God in the usual places, in a church building on Sunday mornings, but we can find God anywhere and everywhere. Just like Paul found this group of women by the river, God can work in unexpected places in our lives. It might be at work. It might be on an airplane. It might be on a cruise ship. It might be who knows where we can, someone can find God through someone who shares the gospel, or we can meet someone who can have a profound impact in our lives. The key is to be open to God and meeting him wherever he is. In verse 14, now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. So Luke names this woman by name and he explains who she was. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, very likely had potentially moved her business to Philippi. And it says she worshiped God. This was Luke's way of saying she was a Gentile who was a God worshiper and who had come and she was meeting with these Jews.

And the Lord opened her heart to heed or to understand or to follow the things spoken by Paul. So among the women is Lydia. She's a successful businesswoman who was, as he says here, she was one who sold purple cloth. The purple cloth, by the way, in that day, you know, all like even today, cloth has to be dyed. And for any of you who have gone out and bought dye or bought paint

that was red or purple, you know, it tends to be a little bit more expensive. In this day, the purple dye came from a shell or from certain roots or the roots of certain plants. But they, because it took so much more of it, because it was such a deep, rich color, that they tended to be expensive. So if you got purple purple and purple tended to be a royal color, so the very prominent, the royalty, those are the ones who had purple. So she was probably not only a prominent businesswoman, she was probably a fairly well-to-do businesswoman. And so here she is with these women, and it says that God opened her heart. What a beautiful way to describe receptivity to the gospel. Paul told the Corinthian people back in his letter to the Corinthians that those who rejected the gospel was because their minds were darkened.

[13:40] And we know that the Bible tells us that Satan will do everything he can to keep the eyes blinded of the people who haven't trusted Christ. Have you ever shared Jesus with someone, and they just look at you like, yeah, and? Their eyes are blinded. They don't understand. They don't get it. And for some of you who may have heard about God, who may have heard about Jesus, who may have heard that Jesus died on the cross, especially those of you who came to know Jesus later in life, it's almost like one day the light came on. It's like all of a sudden you've heard it before, but now it makes sense, and now it becomes part of you. So this is what happens to Lydia. God opened her heart, and she believed, and she trusted. The light of the truth cuts through the darkness, and when God chooses to open hearts, as he did hear, people enter into his kingdom when they trust, and when through faith they trust what Jesus Christ did on the cross. So we need to be receptive to what God is saying. Lydia was already a worshiper of

God, but she was open to hear more. You know, when we come to Jesus, our learning doesn't stop. When we come to Jesus, the change in our lives doesn't stop there. You know, sometimes we think we know everything we need to know about God, or sometimes we think we know what God's going to say, and we don't truly listen. And so sometimes when someone is trying to teach us, we're like the adult speaking in the Peanuts movie. All we hear is wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, and their ears are closed. But Lydia's ears were open because she wanted to hear what they had to say. Why? Because someone may be telling us something that God is wanting to teach us. So Lydia was already seeking God, but she needed more. She needed to hear the gospel. She needed to hear the good news of Jesus. So this is a reminder that even when we're seeking God, we must be open to what he wants to say to us. Lydia wasn't just going through the religious motions. She was truly listening, and because of that, God opened her heart. So the point is, we need to be willing to listen when God speaks. We also need to be, according to verse 14, we need to be open to change. After Lydia's heart was open to the gospel, notice this wasn't just a spiritual experience for Lydia. It transformed her entire life. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And verse 15, when she and her household were baptized, or and she and her household were baptized. You know, her faith wasn't just something she believed. It became something that she lived. The gospel isn't just information. It's designed for transformation. And so she continued, she went forward, or she went, continued, and was baptized. See, when God opens our hearts, he doesn't intend for us to just add a little bit of religion to our lives. I've heard people put it that way. You know what? I just changed religion. You know, I was whatever. And then, you know, I heard the gospel, and then I changed religion. It's like changing from Methodist to Baptist, or changing from

Roman Catholicism to something else. That's not the gospel. The gospel is going from death to life. The gospel is going from going on the path that is going to ultimately lead us to hell one day, to leading us, or to bringing us to the point where we're going to be with God one day.

So the gospel isn't just information. It's designed for transformation. It's meant to transform us from the inside out. The question is, are we open to the change that God is wanting to bring into our lives? You know, do we have a Sunday-only religion? And do we think Sunday morning is the only time, or Sunday night is the only time we can meet God? Is that the only time we can hear from God? Is that the only time that we can serve God in one way or another? Lydia shows us that real faith leads to transformation. So let God transform our priorities. Also, we need to let our faith change our perspective on success. Look at verse 14. Lydia was this prominent businesswoman, probably fairly well-off, well-to-do. We'll see later. She probably had a pretty decent-sized businesswoman. She's willing to trust Christ and allow it to change her life. So she sees, here was this successful businesswoman. She dealt in purple cloth, which was a luxury item. But after hearing the gospel, I believe her definition of success changed. It wasn't just about wealth or status

anymore. It was about living out her new faith. You know, in our culture, isn't success normally defined by money? It's normally defined by the job that we have, or the profession that we have, or the amount of followers a person may have if they have a big platform. And people today call themselves, some people call themselves influencers, and all they have to do is make a video about something, and all of a sudden they influence millions of people. Is that really success? I believe God changed Lydia's perspective on what success was. So we need to ask ourselves, how does my faith change my definition of success?

[19:52] If I'm able to be obedient to God, if I'm able to trust Him in my life, and I'm able to follow Him wherever He leads me, at the end of your life, when you get to be with God, and you hear, well done, good and faithful servant, isn't that the highest level of success?

Because if we gain success on planet Earth, it'll die with us. And after a generation or two, unless we were an Edison or a George Washington, people will not remember us. But God will and God does. So what is success? I think she figured that out. And Lydia's faith wasn't just a private belief. She let faith change her daily life. Because what did she do in verse 15? She and her household were baptized. And then she begged us, saying, if you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. So she persuaded us. So Lydia's faith wasn't just a private belief. It showed up in her actions. She was willing to be baptized. Her faith impacted how she lived, how she treated others. And she was willing to use her resources for God. See, faith isn't just a Sunday thing. It's an everyday thing. When God opens our hearts, it should impact our daily decisions. You know, how does, ask ourselves, how does faith show up in my daily life? Is it changing the way I live? Or is it just something that I talk about? You know, a lot of people will say that, you know, these Christians, they're a bunch of hypocrites. Because they do a lot of talking, but their life doesn't always show up.

And we also need to be open to the things that God wants us to be engaged in. So Lydia's story, I believe, shows us that when God opens our heart, it's not just about a moment of belief. It's about a life of transformation. And then I think the final thing that we learned from Lydia is I think we need to be open to hospitality. What does she do in verse 15? She invites these four men into her home. Now, let's back up just a little bit. Who was baptized in verse 14 or verse 15? She and her household.

So she was a fairly wealthy businesswoman, apparently. She had a large enough home to have servants, to have people who was attentive to her needs. We also remember the Philippian jailer. [22:50] He and his household end up getting saved. So very likely, they had the opportunity to share the gospel with those who were in her household as well.

And so they all came to trust Christ. We have to be careful that we don't think that just because somebody else in the family trusts Jesus that it extends to us as well. Every one of us has to make that decision for ourselves. Just because a parent or grandparent trusts Christ and raises us in the church doesn't mean that we're automatically a part of the family of God. So we all have to come to know Jesus Christ and trust Him as our own Savior. So obviously, her household trusted Christ. Her whole household, along with her, were baptized. And then Lydia's faith didn't stop with her baptism. It immediately led to action. She opened her home to Paul and to his companions. And I believe this was more than just simply a sign of a simple invitation. It was a sign of a transformed heart. Lydia's hospitality was a tangible outgrowth of her faith. So in this culture, particularly in this culture, inviting someone into your home was a significant act of generosity. You pulled out all the stops, just like this family did for us when we were ministering there. They went to the market and bought food they probably wouldn't eat on a regular basis. They spent way more money probably than they normally would have done on their grocery bill because they wanted to be hospitable to us. They wanted to give us the best. And so this is what Lydia is doing. And it also meant offering safety, provision, fellowship, and she was willing to open her home. You know, today we might not think much of inviting someone over. That's something that doesn't happen very often to many people, to be invited over to someone's house. And it makes a big difference. Or maybe even just invited out to eat. So hospitality then was a way of showing honor, a way of showing acceptance. And I believe even today it's a way of getting to know someone, just to spend a little bit of time with them, away from the public, away from an organized setting. Because isn't eating a meal with someone and staying with someone kind of a more of a sign of more closeness? And I think this was going on here. I think the principle today remains the same. When God transforms hearts, I think it should help us to be willing to open our hearts and sometimes even our homes to others.

The point is,

I think we should be using our resources to bless others, just like she's doing here. So Lydia didn't just keep her faith to herself. She acted on it. She was baptized. She opens up her home. And the real faith isn't just something we believe. It's something that we do. And it led to her actions.

You know, how often do we say we believe something, but it doesn't change our life? How often do we say we believe something to be true, but then we don't act upon that truth? So I think Lydia challenges us to put our faith into action. It might be opening up our home. It might be using some resources. It might be using a talent that you have to serve someone else, using your resources to bless others.

[26 : 53] And I think it will lead to a tangible expression of our love. And also to understand that hospitality is a ministry. Now, hospitality is a spiritual gift. That's one of the gifts that God gives, just like evangelism, just like administration. And there are some, that's just their gift.

They love to do hospitality. They love to have people over. They love to cook. They love to entertain people. Not everyone's like that. Some of us tend to be a little bit more private. Some, some it's a little bit of more of a struggle to be hospitable or to entertain.

So to understand that ministry doesn't just take place inside these four walls. Ministry can take place anywhere. And so here is Lydia. She's inviting these, these missionaries into her home and she takes care of them. I'm sure she feeds them. She gives them a place to stay, which would have pretty well shown us the scope of her house. She had enough room to house four guys, plus her servants that most likely lived in the house along with them. And it's amazing that this hospitality worked, I believe, to spread the gospel because a church was formed in Philippi.

And there's probably a good, it's probably fairly good to say that the church may have begun meeting in Lydia's home. And Lydia most likely continued to be involved in the gospel. If you remember Paul a little bit later, I think it's Acts 20, I don't remember the chapter, but when Paul writes to the church in Philippi, he says, when no one else had supported me, you all sent me money. You all helped me, not once, but at least twice, the church in Philippi sent support to the apostle Paul. And it's very good possibility that Lydia was one of the ones that added a significant amount to the, to the offering because she wanted the gospel to continue to be spread around the world. So hospitality is a ministry and it can happen anytime, anywhere. And hospitality is a very powerful way to show our love to others. So we ask ourselves, how can we have our house, our place, our, or our resources? How can we use our resources for others? Then I believe the next thing is open your life, not just your door.

Open your life, not just your door. She didn't just open her door to her home. I believe she opened her life. She welcomed Paul, welcomed his companions. And I believe she and the others there continue to have a place in Paul and the missionaries' lives. You know, this, this kind of act involves vulnerability.

[30 : 05] When we, when we open our lives to others, it demonstrates a level of trust. It demonstrates a level of commitment, allowing others into our life, not just into our home. You know, it's, it's one thing to invite someone over for a visit, but it's really another thing to invite them into your life, to let them know when you're having a bad day, to be honest enough with them to look, to know that you're struggling with something. We don't do that with strangers, but we do that with people that we open our lives to, open our hearts to. You know, I'm going through something. Would you pray with me?

Um, and sometimes we share things that we wouldn't typically share with others. It's about true hospitality goes beyond offering a meal. It's about offering yourself, you know, ask yourself, am I willing to let others into my life? Am I willing to let others see me as I really am? You know, not just my home. So I believe Lydia's example is a challenge to help us to consider going deeper in our relationships with people. So Lydia's story, I believe shows us that when God opens our hearts, it should also lead us to open our lives to others as well. See, hospitality is more than just inviting someone over. It's more than just inviting them to coffee. I believe it's a ministry and it's more about being vulnerable, letting other people into our lives and creating a space where God can work, where God can minister and where love can be shared. So the challenge I believe is how can it be more like Lydia? Hear what God's saying, trust what God's saying, and how is it going to change my life?

And how am I going to move forward? And how can my life make a difference in the lives of others? Father, this morning we've come to you. We thank you for your word. We thank you for your

willingness to lead us, teach us, guide us, and change us. And I pray this morning, dear God, that you would help us to learn from you, help us to be willing to share our resources. And I thank you, Heavenly Father, for each one here today that's willing to give of their time, that's willing to give of their abilities to serve others. And Father, it's so refreshing to see people come to one another's aid when there is a need to serve one another and to meet each other's needs as a real family would. So Father, we thank you. We praise you for what you're going to do in our lives and what you're going to do through us. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.
Amen.