

The Book of Acts

GROUP CURRICULUM

SERMON THE CHURCH ENCOURAGED! (ACTS 15:36-16:15)

DATE APRIL 19, 2020

³⁶And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are." ³⁷Now Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

16:1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. ²He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. ³Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

⁶And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹²and 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. ¹³And 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. ¹⁴One 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. ¹⁵And 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. (ESV)

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1. Take a moment before the study to consider your own heart at this time. How encouraged would you say you are? Are there things that have appeared in your life recently to discourage you? In these difficult days, do you find yourself more or less prone to discouragement?
2. Sometimes it's easy to forget just how much ground the missionary journeys in the book of Acts covered. Consider the map below and in the text above highlight all the locations that Paul and the others visited.



3. Highlight also the key persons in this portion of Scripture.

4. What was the nature of the disagreement in **Acts 15:36-40**? Despite their differences, neither Paul nor Barnabas abandoned their mission. What does this fact say to us when we have sharp disagreements with other believers?
5. Do you find yourself in disagreements with others more often during these stressful and trying days? Read **Philippians 2:1-11** and **Romans 12:9-13**. How can you handle these disagreements you face with love and humility?
6. Why do you think these seasoned leaders like Paul and Barnabas liked to take inexperienced men like Mark, Titus, and Timothy with them on their trips? Read **Philippians 4:9**, **2 Timothy 2:1-3**, and **Titus 2:3-8**. What is the principle you can apply to your own life?
7. To guide Paul into Europe (Macedonia), The Holy Spirit closed a door to the south and to the north. Has God closed doors for you recently? Have you considered that God may be opening doors for the gospel and using you to do so? Do you see this time of quarantine as more confinement or opportunity?
8. Consider again this quote by G. Campbell Morgan:
“It is better to go to Troas with God, than to go anywhere else without Him.”

How does this quote fit into your life right now?