

LESSON 13
August 30, 2026

Unit III: Faithful Witnesses Spread the Good News

All Are Welcome

DEVOTIONAL READING: James 2:14-26
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Acts 16:11-40
PRINT PASSAGE: Acts 16:11-15, 40

KEY VERSE

When she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. (Acts 16:15, KJV)

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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. (Acts 16:15, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Explore Lydia’s hospitality to Paul and Barnabas as a characteristic of a faithful witness.
- Confess our struggles with offering and receiving hospitality.
- Practice hospitality as a characteristic of a faithful witness.

*Key Terms

Customary (verse 13)—Greek: *nomizó* (nomid’-zo): to hold by custom; think; supposed; “wont” (KJV); “expected” (NIV).

Day(s) (verse 12)—Greek: *héméra* (hay-mer’- ah): the period(s) from sunrise to sunset.

District (verse 12)—Greek: *meris* (mer-ece’): a division of a country; a share; a portion; a judgeship, jurisdiction, a region; “part” (KJV).

Exhorted (verse 40)—Greek: *parakaleó* (parak-al-eh’-o): to (have) call(ed) to one’s side; “comforted” (KJV); “encouraged” (NIV).

Gathered (verse 13)—Greek: *sunerchomai* (soon-er’-khom-ahee): to come together; accompany; assemble; “resorted” (KJV).



The Biblical Context

The broader biblical context of this lesson is Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:22), which occurred after the Jerusalem Council, led by Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James. This crucial early church council confirmed that Gentile converts did not need to fully follow the Mosaic Law, especially circumcision, to be saved. Paul suggested that he and Barnabas revisit the churches they had established during Paul's first evangelistic trip, following this council. A serious disagreement with Barnabas over John Mark, who had previously abandoned them, led to their separation. Barnabas headed to Cyprus with Mark, while Paul traveled to Syria and Cilicia with Silvanus (Acts 15:36–41). Their separation, however, further spread the Gospel, created additional missionary teams, and led to Paul being redirected in a vision by the Holy Spirit from Asia Minor to Europe (Acts 16:1–10). As a result of God's Spirit-directed call, Paul and his team (Silvanus, Luke, and Timothy) sailed to Neapolis and journeyed inland to Philippi, an important Roman colony in the district of Macedonia, making it the first European city to hear the Gospel preached. Acts 16:11–15, the focus passage, records the results of Paul's and his team's ministry in Philippi—the conversion of Lydia, the first European convert to Christianity.

Sailed (verse 11)—Greek: *anagó* (an-ag'-o): to (have) put to sea; to (have) launch(ed) out; “loosing from” (KJV).

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Hospitality involves offering warm and thoughtful treatment to guests and strangers. Showing hospitality is not a new tradition among humans. Centuries ago, when travel was risky, people often faced bad weather, thieves, and threats from wild animals; therefore, having a safe place to rest was highly valued. In ancient Near Eastern cultures, the practice of hospitality was deeply rooted in their customs and traditions, going beyond mere good manners due to the harsh nature of nomadic desert life. Among God's chosen people, Israel, the biblical tradition of welcoming and receiving strangers evolved into sacred codes of conduct, reinforced by the belief that strangers were divinely sent (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2007). For example, when a group of strangers arrived at Abraham's tent, he greeted them with respect and humility and prepared a meal for them (Genesis 18:1–8). As God guided Israel's development into a nation to serve as His redemptive representatives in Canaan, He provided specific instructions about being hospitable to strangers and foreigners (Leviticus 19:33–34). The practice of extending hospitality also became a central part of early Christian communities obeying Scriptural commands and demonstrating Christ's selfless, sacrificial love (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9). For Christians today, practicing hospitality is a meaningful way to witness

in a self-centered and indifferent world, offering opportunities to reach marginalized individuals and society's “left outs” for Christ and the salvation He offers.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Faithful Witnesses' Ministry (*Acts 16:11-13*)

KJV

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

NIV

11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis.

12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

13 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.

Paul began his second missionary journey after the Jerusalem Council's vital decision to free Gentile converts from the requirement of circumcision and strict adherence to the Mosaic Law. The goal of this second evangelistic effort was to assess the progress of the churches established during the first journey and to share this message with them. After parting ways with Barnabas due to a heated disagreement over John Mark, who had deserted them earlier (Acts 15:39-41), Paul chose Silas and recruited Timothy. He then traveled through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches and delivering the decision of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 16:1-5). However, in a vision, Paul and his team were prevented from witnessing in Asia, redirecting them to Macedonia in Europe (Acts 16:6-10). Consequently, Paul and his evangelistic team leave Troas, cross the Aegean Sea, and eventually arrive in Neapolis, a port city near the Macedonian city of Philippi. They remain there for several days, setting the stage for the expansion of the Gospel in Europe (verses 11-12). As faithful witnesses to Christ, Paul and his companions sought a place of prayer on the Sabbath day. They went outside to the riverside because there was no synagogue in Philippi and ministered to a group of women who had assembled there (verse 13). Disregarding Jewish cultural restrictions on teaching women publicly, Paul seized the opportunity to share the Gospel with this group of praying women, thus preparing the way for the first convert to Christianity in Europe. Paul's actions demonstrate that true faith in a believer's life is validated by actively responding to God's call, even when it requires sacrifice or changing plans, going beyond cultural and gender boundaries, and prioritizing ministry over personal comfort and convenience.

❓ WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How did Paul's witnessing to these women demonstrate Christian hospitality?

A Faithful Witness's Hospitality (*Acts 16:14-15, 40*)

KJV

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

.....

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

NIV

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

15 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.

.....

40 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.

One of the women gathered for prayer was Lydia, a wealthy merchant who sold purple cloth and was a worshipper of God from Thyatira (verse 14). When Paul began sharing the Gospel, God opened Lydia's heart, and she accepted Christ, becoming the first person to convert to Christianity in Europe. Lydia's description as a worshipper of God suggests she was already seeking Israel's God and that He had begun preparing her heart for Paul's message. Verse 14 also highlights the importance of God's sovereignty in orchestrating encounters that lead to the expansion of His kingdom and create transformative opportunities for salvation. Furthermore, Lydia's conversion demonstrates that the message of salvation is open and accessible to everyone, regardless of social status, ethnicity, gender, or cultural background. Verse 15 provides clear evidence that her salvation was genuine through her good works. After her baptism, Lydia's influence likely led to the conversion and baptism of her household servants. Additionally, she showed hospitality to Paul and his companions in Philippi by inviting them

into her home, demonstrating that true faith is reflected in good works that meet others' needs. Lydia's conversion opened her home to Paul, his companions, and probably served as the spiritual center for a growing group of believers in Philippi, as confirmed by Paul and Silas returning there after their miraculous release from prison to encourage them before leaving the city (verse 40). Likewise, believers are now encouraged to balance their verbal confession of faith with deeds that demonstrate their trust and obedience to God's will and purposes.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are some practical ways for believers to demonstrate their salvation through their time, resources, and personal witness in ministering to God's people?

A Closing Thought

Lydia demonstrated her faith by welcoming Paul and his companions and opening her home as a meeting place for believers in Philippi after her conversion. As a result, her actions that helped others served as proof of her transformed life. Her example affirms James' teaching that saving faith is shown through works and that true believers demonstrate their salvation by being doers of the Word, not just hearers (James 1:22; 2:14-26). Therefore, the core responsibility of every believer is to ensure they support their confession of Christ with actions that address other's needs. In this lesson's focus, a specific way to show genuine faith is by practicing hospitality, literally, "showing love to strangers." Hospitality is a vital ministry among Christians because it is commanded in Scripture (Romans 12:13), reflects obedience to Christ's command to love others unconditionally (John 13:34), provides a way to nurture Christian fellowship, and serves as a witness to the world about God's grace for the lost. Consequently, the faith community, both individually and collectively, is called to make hospitality a priority as the outward sign of faith in God and obedience to His Word.

Your Life

Practicing Christian hospitality demonstrates God's love and compassion for people, serving as a tangible sign of true believers' salvation. Therefore, this week, think about and commit to genuinely showing hospitality to someone in your community or congregation as a clear sign of your faithfulness to God.

Your World!

One major obstacle to sharing the Gospel is overcoming cultural differences. A practical approach is finding ways to show hospitality to those from different religions or ethnic backgrounds. Discuss how your church can demonstrate hospitality to a diverse community and foster a welcoming environment as a positive step toward reaching them for Christ or helping with practical needs.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for being the ultimate host who invited us and welcomed us into Your family through faith in Jesus Christ. Now, please help us extend sincere hospitality to others as a visual demonstration of our faith by using our unique spiritual gifts to meet their needs as Your faithful witnesses. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson focuses on God's purpose for the Israelites as He called Joshua to be strong and courageous, and how we can also follow in those steps (Joshua 1:1-11).

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, August 31	"More Than Victorious"	(Romans 8:31-39)
TUESDAY, September 1	"See What God Has Promised"	(Genesis 13:14-18)
WEDNESDAY, September 2	"The Promised Land Revealed"	(Deuteronomy 34:1-12)
THURSDAY, September 3	"God's Promised Rest"	(Hebrews 4:1-10)
FRIDAY, September 4	"God's New Covenant"	(Hebrews 10:14-18)
SATURDAY, September 5	"Whom Shall I Fear?"	(Psalm 27)
SUNDAY, September 6	"Be Strong and Courageous"	(Joshua 1:1-11)

Notes
