



Sermon Growth Guide

September 1, 2024

Jennifer's Farewell Sermon - An Open Heart

Acts 16:11-15

Key Verse: Acts 16:14c

"The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."

Big Idea: It is the work of the Holy Spirit to open hearts to respond to the good news of Jesus.

Foundations

This week we look at a little story in the book of Acts about Lydia and how the Lord plants his church in Philippi. In this story we get a front row view of the Holy Spirit orchestrating the opening of a heart. Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke are on a missionary journey to share the gospel. The Holy Spirit is their guide, and they are learning together to follow the Spirit's instructions. The Spirit leads this little band of travelers to Philippi, to a river outside the city walls on the Sabbath. The river was the place of prayer where worshippers of God gathered if there was no synagogue in the city. John Stott writes this: "There seems to be no synagogue in Philippi, but there was a place of prayer (as the missionaries had expected there would be), which was just over a mile outside the city gate...Since Luke adds the congregation consisted of women, it is usually assumed this explains the non-existence of a synagogue: a quorum of ten men was necessary before a synagogue could be started." (Stott, *The Message of Acts*, p. 245). That morning, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to Paul's message. Maybe you will remember how and when the Lord opened your heart to the message of the gospel. If you haven't already shared that story, maybe start there!

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Acts 16:6-10 for context. What do you hear, observe, notice about how the Holy Spirit leads Paul and his companions? Read Acts 16:11-15. Why was it important for this missionary team to arrive at the river on this particular morning? What do you notice about this special encounter?

Applying God's Word

When Lydia is baptized along with her whole household, she invites and then persuades Paul and his companions to stay at her home. The opening of her heart leads her to open her home. Talk about the significance of this invitation.

Witnessing God's Word

As you think about the people in your life who do not yet know the good news, how is the Lord orchestrating your life to intersect theirs? Do you see signs of openness? If so, what are they? Pray together for the people in your pathway during the week. Ask God to help you be present, to pay attention to how God is at work in your interactions. Pray that the Lord would open their hearts to respond to the good news!