

30 August 2026

Lydia, the Generous Hostess

Lesson Text: Acts 16:11-15, 40



Key Text: “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

After participating in this lesson, we will be able to:

1. Summarize the circumstances that God used to bring the good news of Jesus to Lydia’s household.
2. Explain why acts of hospitality were vital for Christians of the first century.
3. Plan to practice hospitality as a characteristic of his or her own faithful witness.

Lesson Text

Acts 16:11-15, 40

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^[a] 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.

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.

Introduction

The Bible teaches us to show hospitality to others (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 8; etc.). Jesus himself taught when believers extend hospitality to "the least of these brothers and sisters of mine," it is regarded as being done unto the Lord himself (Matthew 25:34–40). Today's study provides a first-century example of hospitality toward a stranger. Through this example, we will see how Christian love is embodied.

Lesson Context

The book of Acts talks about the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul. The church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to share the gospel beyond their city, traveling to Cyprus, Pisidia, Pamphylia, and Galatia. This trip is usually called Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 13:1–14:28).

On Paul's next missionary journey (Acts 15:36–18:22), he and Silas visited the same places as before and traveled farther west toward Roman Asia. At the beginning, Paul and Barnabas disagreed about bringing John Mark, who was Barnabas's relative (Colossians 4:10). Because of this, they split into two teams. Barnabas and John Mark returned to Cyprus (Acts 15:39), which was Barnabas's home (4:36), while Paul chose Silas, a respected church leader (15:22), to travel with him (15:40–41).

Paul then went to Lystra, where he met Timothy and invited him to join the journey (Acts 16:1–5). Paul and his companions traveled through Phrygia and Galatia. They reached Troas, a port

city at the north end of the Aegean Sea. There, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia asking him to come to that region (16:8–10). This is where today’s lesson begins, during Paul’s second missionary journey. The year is about AD 50, around 15 years after Paul met the risen Christ.

Encouraging Encounters

“We left Troas and sailed directly for Samothrace, then on the following day proceeded to Neapolis.” The fact that Paul departs from Troas across the Aegean Sea with Silas and Timothy; follows on from the vision which a man from Macedonia had just before this passage; the first-person plural pronoun we indicate that Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, is with them. Samothrace is a small island city situated on the eastern coast of Macedonia and lies approximately 50 miles to the northwest of Troas. Since the winds in the northern part of the Aegean Sea generally come from the northeast, the ship can make good progress towards Neapolis, which is about 70 miles from Samothrace. Neapolis acts as the port city for Philippi, a place which is around 10 miles inland (this should be contrasted with the five days’ journey in the opposite direction referred to in Acts 20:6).

We went to Philippi, which was a Roman colony and the principal city in that part of Macedonia, and remained there for several days. Philippi is a city possessing a long history; it was named after Philip II and came into Roman hands in 168 BC. Since it lies on a major Roman road, there has been a great deal of trade traffic throughout the area, making it an important commercial and administrative center of the Roman world in the center of the Greco-Roman world. The city is home to several retired Roman soldiers and contains few Jews. The time that Paul and his companions spent in the city was several days, although this could indicate a period as short as a week.

Encountering Lydia

On the Sabbath we went to the city gate and then to the river, hoping to locate a place where one could pray. We settled down and started to talk to the women who had gathered there.

Paul usually went first to the local synagogue when starting a ministry in a new city (as seen in [Acts 13:14; 14:1; 18:4](#)). The situation was different in Philippi. Since Philippi had a history as a Roman colony, there may have been too few Jews in the city to make a synagogue necessary. According to Jewish custom, *at least ten Jewish men are required to form a proper synagogue*.

Since the religious practices of first-century Jews appeared to require running water for ritual purification, it would be ideal for Jews to gather together for prayer and worship at a site by the river if there was no synagogue in Philippi; the river in question could be the [Gangites River](#), which is about a mile from the town.

In first-century Macedonia women enjoyed a greater degree of independence than is found in other ancient Greco-Roman societies, and in Philippi they held leadership positions in connection with pagan and cultic worship, particularly in the temple of Artemis.

During this time, most women were expected to follow their husbands’ religious practices. Still, Roman men often complained about their wives being influenced by foreign religions that were

not Greco-Roman. Historians note that many Gentile women converted to Judaism or joined Jewish women in worship. So, it makes sense that Paul would meet both Jewish and Gentile women. Women also played important roles in the early church, as seen in Acts 18:2 and Philippians 4:3. At the riverside, Paul meets a woman who would become a key member of the new church in Philippi.

Among those listening was a woman named Lydia from the city of Thyatira. She sold purple cloth. Lydia's name stands out because it is also the name of a district in the Roman province of Asia Minor. Some scholars think she may have once been enslaved, since people were often named after their homeland. Lydia came from Thyatira, the capital of the district of Lydia, which is about 100 miles southeast of Troas, across the Aegean Sea (compare Revelation 2:18–29). Thyatira was famous for its dyed textiles, especially purple. Making purple dye in the first century was a difficult and smelly job, since it came from the murex snail. Because of this, purple cloth was very expensive and usually worn by the wealthy or royalty. As a trader of this dye, Lydia was probably quite wealthy.

Lydia was a worshiper of God, and the Lord helped her respond to Paul's message. When the Bible calls Lydia a worshiper of God, it could mean one of three things: she was Jewish, she had converted to Judaism, or she was a God-fearing Gentile like Cornelius (see Acts 10:2). The third option is most likely. The Greek word for 'worshiper' here is the same one used for Gentile converts who follow God (Acts 13:43; 17:17). Even though Lydia was independent and wealthy, she was open to hearing about Christ. Instead of spending days thinking over Paul's words, her heart was opened by the Lord as Paul preached. This might mean God cleared up any misunderstandings that could have kept her from accepting a Messiah who had been crucified. This is like what happens at the end of Luke's Gospel, when Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection and "opened their minds so that they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45)

Believing and Baptizing

When Lydia and the members of her household were baptized, Lydia's decision to believe is followed by her baptism, and the account suggests this takes place swiftly, maybe on the same day. In the book of Acts, faith and baptism are frequently mentioned together. For instance, the Samaritans who heard Philip's preaching both believed and were baptized (Acts 8:12). After having heard Philip the gospel message, the Ethiopian eunuch at once wished to be baptized (8:35–38). Similarly, the Philippian jailer and his family were baptized (16:31–33). The Corinthians, too, when they heard Paul's preaching, believed and were baptized (18:8). Lydia's conversion is therefore in accordance with this pattern.

The first reference in the book of Acts to a household being baptized is found there (Acts 16:33; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:16). Nothing is said in the text about the make-up of Lydia's household; since her household is led by her in undergoing baptism, she might be a widow and thus the head of the household with authority over the members of it.

She invited us to her house and said, "Should you regard me as someone who believes in the Lord, then you are to come and stay at my place." She managed to persuade us. Lydia is not any longer just a "worshiper of God" (see Acts 16:14 above); she has undergone a change in identity to become a believer in the Lord. This change in her should not be ignored. The book of

Acts usually gives an account of a person's heart following baptism. For example, the Ethiopian departed rejoicing (Acts 8:39), and the Philippian jailer was filled with joy and at the same time brought the missionaries into his home and prepared a meal for them (16:34). In this instance, one of Lydia's responses after her baptism is her firm determination that Paul and his companions should lodge at her house—a response that shows generosity and hospitality.

It could prove to be a dangerous thing for Lydia to extend such an invitation, since her neighbors might resist the gospel—just as the mob did in Ephesus (Acts 19:28). Although Lydia can invite the missionaries to live in her house, she cannot be sure about how her neighbors will react. For her, the invitation is not merely an inconvenience due to her busy timetable; it is an act of courage.

Out of Prison

When Paul and Silas had got out of prison, a dangerous situation had arisen which led to their spending time in prison. While in Philippi, Paul met an enslaved woman who had a spirit capable of telling the future. The enslaved woman followed Paul and his companions throughout the town, announcing where they were going and what they intended to do (Acts 16:16–17). Because she annoyed him with her presence and behavior, Paul finally cast the spirit out of her (16:18). The woman's masters became angry since they had lost income because of the spirit being removed and so they gathered the people of the town and the authorities against Paul and Silas (16:19–20). As a result, the two of them were flogged and thrown into prison (16:22–24).

That night Paul and his companions were given a miraculous freedom when an earthquake broke their chains (Acts 16:26). Instead of taking revenge on the jailer, they converted him and his whole household to faith in Christ (16:28–32). The next morning, having declared his Roman citizenship to the authorities, they were taken out of the prison by them and asked to leave Philippi (16:35–39).

Place of Refuge

They visited Lydia's house, where they came together with her brothers and sisters and encouraged them; after that they departed. The change in the narrative from the first-person plural 'us' (as in Acts 16:15b, above) to the third-person 'they' shows that Luke is probably not with Paul at this stage of the journey.

Before leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas felt the need to stop once more at Lydia's house to rest and get better after having been set free from prison. They are going to visit Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth (Acts 17–18). The gospel will therefore spread, either because of or despite the persecution.

Once more, Lydia shows her hospitality. It is also an opportunity for Paul and Silas to see the brothers and sisters who follow Christ and to comfort them. For such meetings to take place, an appropriate place is required, and it is Lydia's house that provides it. Not only do the missionaries receive a welcome at Lydia's house, but other members of the first-century church in Philippi are likewise welcomed there, which indicates that her house was very large by the standards of that time. It is possible that Paul's letter to the Philippians would later be read out

loud in her house. Even though there was a risk from their pagan worshipping neighbors, Lydia still extends hospitality to those who come to preach the gospel of Christ.

Conclusion

Actions of hospitality are a true testimony to the transforming impact of the gospel; hospitality is basically "love put into practice". When we practice hospitality, we show our love both for God and for others. Lydia showed this by offering a welcoming place where people could come together, share meals, take part in fellowship and prayer, and meet Christ. It's easy to imagine what Paul's situation would have been in Philippi if Lydia had not been hospitable; he would then have had no base for his ministry and no place to go back to after being set free from prison.

In the world today, the idea of hospitality needn't be limited to opening your house up to missionaries, even though that is one way of showing it. It might consist of sharing a meal with new members of your church community, offering space for prayer and fellowship, or just being attentive to the needs of your neighbors.

One should never make use of hospitality as a means of displaying one's abilities; instead, it should be a way of showing love, a love that arises from having experienced the fullest form of love—which is salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. When Lydia came to know this transforming love, she then put her hospitality to use to change the lives of other people.

How are we going to apply our hospitality to make a difference in the lives of those nearby?

Take Aways

Closing Prayer

Daily Bible Readings*



*(*Liturgical Color: Green (Life, growth, and hope))*

Daily Scripture Reading

Monday: The Journey to Philippi

- **Reading:** Acts 16:11–12
- **Focus:** Paul and his companions travel to Philippi, a leading Roman colony in Macedonia. Notice how the guidance of the Holy Spirit directs their steps toward a historic meeting.

Tuesday: By the Riverbank

- **Reading:** Acts 16:13
- **Focus:** On the Sabbath, Paul goes outside the city gate to a river where people gathered for prayer. Picture the quiet, outdoor setting where the gospel message begins to take root in Europe.

Wednesday: Meeting Lydia

- **Reading:** Acts 16:14a
- **Focus:** Meet Lydia, a businesswoman from Thyatira who sells expensive purple cloth and is a worshiper of God. Reflect on her reputable profession and her open, spiritual heart.]

Thursday: The Lord Opens Her Heart

- **Reading:** Acts 16:14b

- **Focus:** As Lydia listens to Paul, the Lord opens her heart to respond to the message. Consider how faith is both a human hearing of the Word and a divine work of grace.

Friday: Baptism and Faith

- **Reading:** Acts 16:15a
- **Focus:** Lydia and the members of her household are baptized. Celebrate her immediate public profession of faith and the spiritual transformation of her family. [

Saturday: An Act of Hospitality

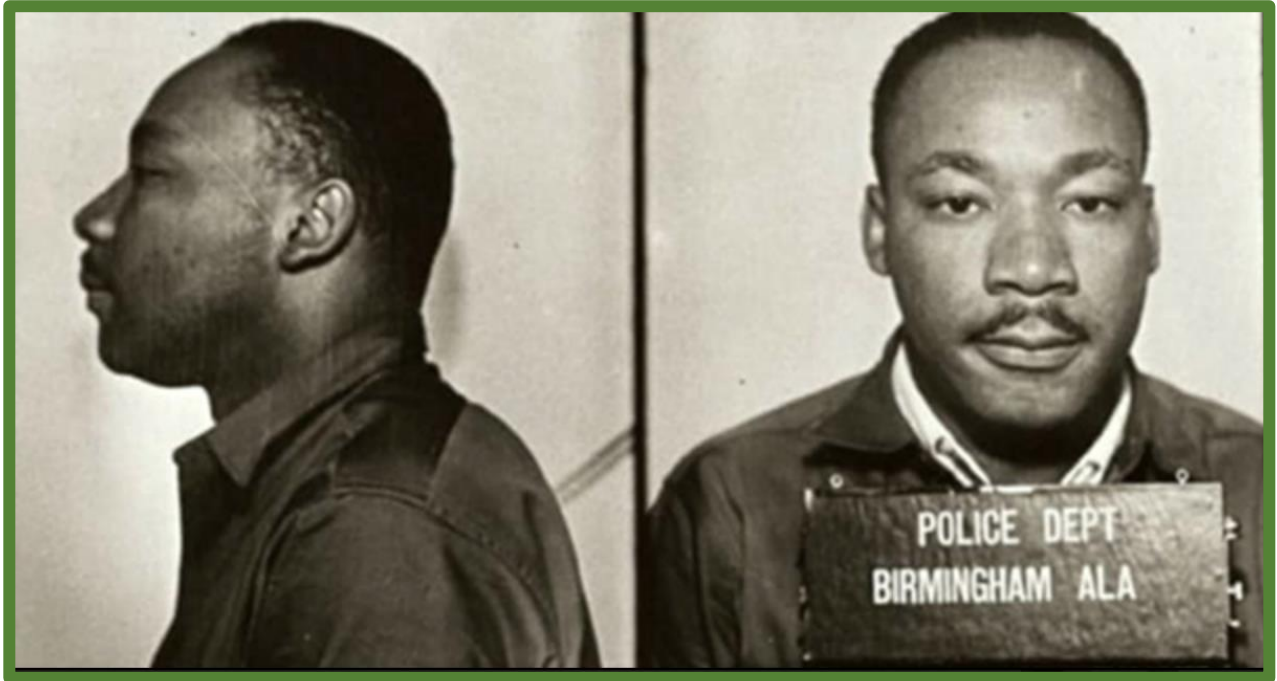
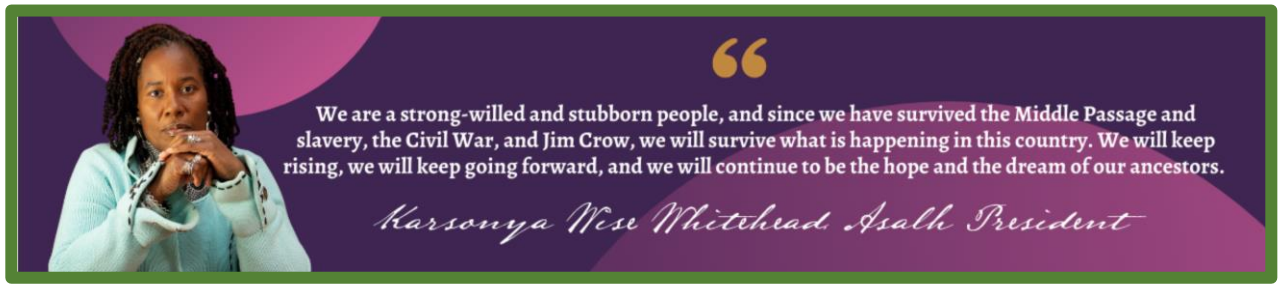
- **Reading:** Acts 16:15b
- **Focus:** Lydia urges Paul and his team to stay at her home if they judge her faithful. Examine how her newly found faith immediately overflows into generous hospitality, making her home a base for the first church in Europe.

Sunday: Legacy of Faith and Perseverance

- **Reading:** Acts 16:40
- **Focus:** After being released from prison, Paul and Silas return to Lydia's house to encourage the believers. Reflect on Lydia's legacy as a courageous pillar and supporter of the early Christian movement.

.

BLACK HISTORY



Martin Luther King, Jr. Was Arrested 29 Times For These So-Called Crimes

Few people know that MLK was arrested almost 30 times fighting for what he believed in. His so-called "crimes" varied, and his arrests took place in various cities in the south.

Here are just a few occasions when he was arrested and why:

January 26, 1956 -- He was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama as part of a “Get Tough” campaign to intimidate the bus boycotters. Four days later, on January 30, his home was bombed.

March 22, 1956 -- King, Rosa Parks and more than 100 others were arrested on charges of organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott in protest of Parks' treatment.

September 3, 1958 -- While attempting to attend the arraignment of a man accused of assaulting Abernathy, King is arrested outside Montgomery's Recorder's Court and charged with loitering. He is released a short time later \$100 bond.

September 5, 1958 -- King was convicted of disobeying a police order and fined \$14. He chooses to spend 14 days in jail but is soon released when Police Commissioner Clyde Sellers pays his fine.

October 19, 1960 -- He was arrested in Atlanta, Georgia during a sit-in while waiting to be served at a restaurant. He was sentenced to four months in jail, but after intervention by then presidential candidate John Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy, he was released.

May 4, 1961 -- He was arrested in Albany, Georgia for obstructing the sidewalk and parading without a permit.

July 27, 1962 -- He was arrested again and jailed for holding a prayer vigil in Albany, Georgia.

April 12, 1963 -- He and Ralph Abernathy were arrested in Birmingham, Alabama for demonstrating without a permit. During his time in jail, he wrote what is now known as his historic "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

June 11, 1964 -- He was arrested for protesting for the integration of public accommodations in St. Augustine, Florida.

February 2, 1965 -- He was arrested in Selma, Alabama during a voting rights demonstration, but the demonstrations continued leading to demonstrators being beaten at the Pettus Bridge by state highway patrolmen and sheriff's deputies.

Sadly, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee on April 4, 1968 while visiting the city to fight for economic justice for the city's sanitation workers who wanted better working conditions and higher pay. His legend, however, continues to live on.

Association for the Study of African American Life and History

The mission of the ASALH® is to promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community. Established on September 9, 1915, by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, we are the Founders of Black History Month and carry forth the work of our founder, the Father of Black History. We continue his legacy of speaking a fundamental truth to the world—that Africans and peoples of African descent are makers of history and co-workers in what W. E. B. Du Bois called, “The Kingdom of Culture.” ASALH is in short, the nexus between the Ivory Tower and the global public.



The Negro Historical Association with Carter Woodson (with bow tie) seated next to Mary Church Terrell (in white) in front row, center, of this portrait (1925). Source: Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Archives, Howard University, Washington DC

We are in the final stages of organizing the Northern Virginia Branch. Interested, contact: *Deac Joe Boutte, Bro Harvey Woodson, or Rev Gillis M. Taylor.*

Join The ASALH NOVA Branch!!