



**ACTS - SMALL GROUP SERIES
LESSON 4**

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**Created by Ministry to Youth
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Lesson 4

Bible: “That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” 10 So we[c] decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.” Acts 16:9-10 (NLT)

Bottom Line: Saying “yes” to Jesus isn’t the finish line, it’s the starting line. Once we trust Jesus for our salvation by His grace, our response is to share this good news with everyone, everywhere, no matter what. (This passage is the earnest beginning of Paul’s missionary journeys, where he spent the rest of his life traveling from city to city telling the good news of God’s kingdom.)

LESSONS 1, 2 and 3 SUMMARY

How does the greatest moment in history turn into the greatest movement that is still going on in the world today? The power of the Holy Spirit. For the past three weeks, we've learned how the early church began after Jesus ascended to heaven.

The author Luke, shares a detailed account of the ministry that took place when the Holy Spirit came and empower disciples on the day of Pentecost.

In this second letter to Theophilus, we learn how the disciples carried out their mission given to them by Jesus in **Acts 1:8**.

And week two, Luke paints the picture of what a community of believers looks like. They shared all things in common.

They had one purpose and one focus which was Jesus Christ and through that common purpose, they live life together guided by the Holy Spirit.

Last week we saw the persecution the early church face and how the disciples continued to share the gospel in the face of opposition.

Luke's account in chapter 11 shows us that even when the church is persecuted the Holy Spirit can open people's hearts to say yes to Jesus regardless of where they're from or what their background is.

This is what the kingdom of God is supposed to look like. Salvation is for all. It is not just Jews and not just Gentiles; not rich or poor, but all of mankind.

In week 4 we pick up in chapter 16. Several events have transpired since week 3 which concluded with chapter 11.

So that we can understand how Paul's missionary journeys began and the events that led up to it, let's take a quick look at the chapters in between.

In chapter 12 we find James is martyred and Peter is imprisoned then escapes.

The gospel continues to spread, and Paul's first missionary journey begins in chapter 13.

Chapters 14 and 15 share the accounts of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium. Here we see these two powerful men of God have a disagreement and that disagreement leads to Paul's second missionary journey.

Discussion Questions

1. How has your knowledge of the holy spirit in the early church grown during the study? Are there still questions that you have that we could answer in this final week of study?
2. How have you been challenged to live in a community with other believers? What would you do differently because of this study?
3. There's a saying that goes "when you know better you do better." What do you know now from the study that you didn't know before? What will you do differently based on what you have learned?

Lesson

Read Acts 15:36-41:

36 After some time Paul said to Barnabas, Let s go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing."

37 Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark.

38 But Paul disagreed strongly since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work.

39 Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus.

40 Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord's gracious care.

41 Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there.

At the end of chapter 15, we find Paul and Barnabas discussing returning to the cities where they had previously preached to check in on new believers.

Both agreed this was a good idea; however, this is where the agreement stopped.

Congregational care and follow-up are key to the spiritual growth and health of believers.

When people come to Christ, as fellow believers, our job is to walk through life with them. This is part of the community and fellowship that we saw in chapter 2.

Too often churches take in new believers but leave them to figure out the rest on their own.

Paul wanted to go back and check on those people who they had originally preached to.

He had a desire not to just see them come into the body of Christ but remain in the body.

Barnabas agreed and wanted to bring John along with him and this is where the issues began.

Paul disagreed because on a previous trip, John had not stayed with them and had not continued ministry work with them.

The Bible does not tell us who was right and who was wrong in this situation.

What we do know is that the disagreement was intense, so much to the point that it caused Paul and Barnabas to go their separate ways.

We are imperfect humans. Therefore, we are not going to always agree or get along with everyone around us.

However, as Christians God expects us to resolve our differences according to His word so that we can continue to carry out the mission.

Discussion Questions

1. At some point in our lives, we are all going to disagree with someone. Whether it is our family, friends, coworkers, etc. How do you handle conflict? Share some ways you have solved disagreements in the past.
2. What led to the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas? How did this situation end? What impact can disagreements among believers have on ministry?
3. How is our relationship with God hindered when we are not in a good relationship with others? What can be done to reconcile both earthly and heavenly relationships?

Read Acts 16:1-5:

1 Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek.

2 Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium,

3 so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey. In deference to the Jews of the area, he arranged for Timothy to be circumcised before they left, for everyone knew that his father was a Greek.

4 Then they went from town to town, instructing the believers to follow the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

5 So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day.

Chapter 16 opens with Paul arriving in Lystra and meeting Timothy. Verse 2 tells us that Timothy was not only a believer, but he was well thought of by other believers.

Paul invited Timothy to join him on their journey along with silence. He also arranged for Timothy to be circumcised.

There are two key things we observe in these verses. The first is the provision of God. Although Barnabas did not join Paul, God did not leave him without a replacement. Timothy joined in their missionary journey. The second is Paul's wisdom.

Timothy's mother was a Jewish woman, and his father was Greek. For this reason, Paul thought it best to have Timothy circumcised before they began any mission work.

The circumcision was not for Timothy's salvation, but it was an act of prevention.

Paul didn't want anything to hinder the work they were doing. He realized that he might face opposition because people knew Timothy's father was Greek.

Paul knew his audience. He knew how the Jews may have perceived Timothy if he were uncircumcised.

Luke teaches us a valuable lesson through Paul's ministry. We must address any potential obstacles that can hinder someone from receiving salvation.

Verse five sums up this portion of their journey by saying the church was strengthened and numbers increased daily. Paul was successful in accomplishing what he had set out to do.

He went mission-minded and stay focused that's God gave him power. As a result, the relievers were strengthened in their faith and additional people came to Christ.

When we stay focused on the mission that we've been given, great things can happen.

Read Acts 16:6-10:

6 Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time.

7 Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them to go there.

8 So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas.

9 That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!"

10 So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

Paul and his team set out for their next location. However, the spirit prevents them from heading to Asia.

The Bible doesn't specifically tell us why Paul is prevented from heading in that direction, but we learned that twice he was blocked from getting there.

As believers, we have the commission to go, baptize, and teach the gospel to all nations, but we must still submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God knows where He wants us to go and to whom He wants us to speak. He will block us if we are headed in the wrong direction.

Although this can be discouraging, there is a blessing in God's blocking. We may not be able to see what lies ahead, but God can.

We may not know what obstacles or difficulties we may face, but God does.

So, if the Spirit is blocking us from some person or some area, this is a great opportunity to be thankful and praise God.

In verses nine and 10 we see God's plan for Paul as He revealed it in the vision. Paul was heading to Asia to reach a few groups of people.

However, God has bigger plans and directed Paul to Europe, an entire continent.

Paul could've easily become frustrated and questioned why he was being blocked from Asia. But Paul was a man of faith who trusted God, and he knew his mission.

After his vision, he did not hesitate. He immediately began to leave for Macedonia with the understanding that God wanted him to go there.

We are to share the gospel with others so that they might receive salvation and have a new life in Christ. This was the mission Jesus left for his disciples.

Our job is to be led by the Spirit of God, empowered by the spirit of God, to bring people to the saving knowledge of God. When we trust in that, we can never go wrong.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you respond when things don't go your way? Do you get frustrated and give up or do you try to press ahead anyway despite the opposition? Discuss what you think could have happened if Paul had ignored the blocking from the Holy Spirit?
2. After finishing this series, what will you do to carry out your part of the mission given to Jesus' disciples in **Acts 1:8**?
3. There are missionaries all over the world spreading the gospel and leading others to Christ. Everyone is not called to missionary work. And that's okay. Although we are not called to be missionaries, we can still support the work that they do. Do you know any missionaries serving in our country or abroad? In what ways can we the church, help to support those people doing missionary work all around the world?

SUMMARY OF ACTS

The book of Acts is a snapshot of the first three decades of the early church as it grew. It tells the story of how the gospel spread after the ascension of Jesus Christ.

It was written by Luke, a physician and companion of Paul and a follower of Jesus.

We see the power of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and how that power enabled believers to carry out the mission of Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit was the formal beginning of the church.

Acts tells the story of the apostles and their experiences as they preached and taught Jesus in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria, and beyond—moving to the ends of the earth.

The book of Acts also shows us how Gentiles also came to Christ, further emphasizing that salvation is for all.

Luke also outlines the persecution Christians face in the early church was sharing the message of Jesus.

We are reminded that being a Christian is not easy. Even today, we can be met with conflict.

Despite the trials that we may face, we are still commanded to go and share the good news of the kingdom of God. We have the promise that Jesus will return the same way He left.

When He returns, He is returning for the church. Not the buildings that have been framed around the world, but the people who make up the body of Christ.

Jesus is not returning for a perfect people. He's looking for Spirit-filled purposed people.