

STUDY NOTES

The Acts of the Apostles A MESSAGE SERIES AT NEW CITY CHURCH (Spring 2016)

WWW.NEWCITYPHX.COM/SERMONS - CHRIS TOWNLEY

The following content is based on the message “It’s Not What You Think” spoken on 06/05/16 by Chris Townley at New City Church in Phoenix, AZ. The following is not meant to be a full synopsis of the message but rather a brief look at the main ideas. To use this Study Guide effectively you must listen to the message found at <http://newcityphx.com/sermons/>.

Leaders using these Study Notes for group study and reflection should read the Biblical text thoroughly before beginning, using this resource as assistance and not relying solely on this material for insight. We encourage all leaders to pray and ask the Spirit for revelation as they lead their respective communities.

THE SCRIPTURE: ACTS 15:36 - 16:40

EPISODE 1: Take Your Friend and Go Home

³⁶After 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.”³⁷Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. ³⁸But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. ³⁹Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. ⁴⁰Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord’s gracious care. ⁴¹Then he traveled throughout Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches there. (Acts 15:36-41)

- How do we sharply disagree while still maintaining unity?

EPISODE 2: Let Me Schedule You a Circumcision

¹Paul 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. ²Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and

Iconium, ³so 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. ⁴Then they went from town to town, instructing the believers to follow the decisions made by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. ⁵So the churches were strengthened in their faith and grew larger every day. (Acts 16:1-5)

Paul lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:20).

- What are we willing to endure, compromise, sacrifice so that others will know Christ?

EPISODE 3: Don’t Go There

⁶Next 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. ⁷Then 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. ⁸So instead, they went on through Mysia to the seaport of Troas. ⁹That 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!” ¹⁰So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there. (Acts 16:6-10)

The text does not say **why** they were prevented but only that they were prevented.

- What does this kind of obedience look like in your life?
- What does it mean to listen to the Holy Spirit? And how do we listen to the guiding of the Holy Spirit in our lives today?

EPISODE 4: Slumber Party @ Lydia’s!

¹¹We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. ¹²From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days. ¹³On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. ¹⁴One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. ¹⁵She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. “If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my home.” And she urged us until we agreed. (Acts 16:11-15)

Paul (and his crew) gives Lydia and these women credibility as people, not just objects. And then they affirm her conversion but staying with her and her household.

- How can we affirm and validate women, the marginalized, the oppressed?

EPISODE 5: A Demon Makes the Dough

¹⁶One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit that enabled her to tell the future. She earned a lot of money for her masters by telling fortunes. ¹⁷She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, “These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved.” ¹⁸This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And instantly it left her. ¹⁹Her masters’ hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. ²⁰“The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!” they shouted to the city officials. ²¹“They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice.” ²²A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. ²³They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn’t escape. (Acts 16:16-23)

We still live and operate in a society that exploits others for our own gain. We must also evaluate the demon of exploitation that lurks in and around us.

Sometimes we listen to the Holy Spirit and end up in prison. Sometimes we listen to the Holy Spirit and it’s not what we think.

- What are the “demons of exploitation” we need to call out in the name of Jesus?
- What are the “prisons” the Holy Spirit has led you into?

EPISODE 6 (Series Finale!): Hallelujah, I’m in Prison

²⁴So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks. ²⁵Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. ²⁶Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!

²⁷The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. ²⁸But Paul shouted to him, “Stop! Don’t kill yourself! We are all here!”

²⁹The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰Then he brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.” ³²And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. ³³Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. ³⁴He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

³⁵The next morning the city officials sent the police to tell the jailer, “Let those men go!” ³⁶So the jailer told Paul, “The city officials have said you and Silas are free to leave. Go in peace.”

³⁷But Paul replied, “They have publicly beaten us without a trial and put us in prison—and we are Roman citizens. So now they want us to leave secretly? Certainly not! Let them come themselves to release us!” ³⁸When the police reported this, the city officials were alarmed to learn that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. ³⁹So they came to the jail and apologized to them. Then they brought them out and begged them to leave the city. ⁴⁰When Paul and Silas left the prison, they returned to the home of Lydia. There they met with the believers and encouraged them once more. Then they left town. (Acts 16:24-40)

Paul and Silas pray and sing **before** the chains fall off. And the other prisoners were listening.

- How are you challenged/inspired by the priority they place on praying and singing to God even while they in chains?
- Who is “listening to your life”? And is your life worth imitating?

Paul defers his status and a Roman citizen, thus enduring a beating and imprisonment... only to be given the opportunity to share the word of the Lord with the jailer.

- What would it look like to defer your status for the sake of others?
- How did Jesus defer His status out of love for all people?