



HomeGroup **LEADER'S** Discussion Questions
Week 4: Oct 3-9

THERE IS NO HOMEGROUP HEAD'S-UP PODCAST THIS WEEK, BUT THE GUIDANCE BELOW SHOULD HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THIS WEEK'S DISCUSSION. PICK JUST A FEW OF THE QUESTIONS YOU FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE WITH AND FEEL FREE TO ADAPT THEM TO BETTER FIT YOUR GROUP.

If you were starting a church in a new city, what would be the desired qualities of your first core group of people to help launch it? People who are movers and shakers? The highly intelligent? Those with charming personalities? Certainly those with sterling reputations in the community, right? These could be good traits to pursue, but they might also be too narrow in scope for God's boundary-crossing, barrier-breaking, transforming power.

This chapter of Acts broadens the scope of potential candidates well beyond what we might expect! The gospel, it turns out, is for all classes, backgrounds, and categories of people...even us.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 16:6-34

CONNECT

1. Think back on difficult times you've faced...and maybe you don't have to think back too far! What's your first response when things don't go your way?
2. How was this past week for you?

LEARN

3. Compare and contrast Lydia and the slave girl. What do they have in common and what separates them?

Pastor Tom talks about how different these two women are. Lydia is an entrepreneurial businesswoman who is already a worshiper of God but who doesn't yet know the gospel about Jesus. Far from being an enterprising entrepreneur, the slave girl is in bondage both physically and spiritually. Lydia hears the gospel from Paul and believes. The slave girl is unable to respond to the gospel until the imprisoning demon is driven out of her by Paul's command in Jesus' name. Luke doesn't tell us explicitly that she became a follower of Jesus, but it's likely implied that she did based on the surrounding stories of Lydia and the jailer. This is the one main common feature between them—that God was at work in

rescuing both in spite of their vastly different situations. Question number 7 could be a natural follow-up to this question.

4. What do you notice from Paul and Silas' response to their public beating and imprisonment? What kind of attitude do they exhibit?

Pastor Tom talks about the parallel between the slave girl who's in bondage but set free through the preaching of the gospel. Those who God used to set the slave girl free (i.e., Paul and Silas) are then put in bondage because of how they set her free. Rather than doubt God's control over the circumstances or goodness in His intent, they praise Him even while their situation becomes worse. Question 9 could be a good follow-up to this question.

5. Try to put yourself in Paul and Silas' position. What else could they have done once the earthquake occurred? How does their actual response demonstrate great faith?

They could very likely have fled the scene, thinking that all God had in mind by the miracle was to set them free. Instead, they prioritize the opportunity to share the gospel even at the risk of remaining imprisoned.

6. How would you describe the impact of the gospel on the relationship between Paul and Silas with the jailer (and even his household) before and after the earthquake?

Prior to the earthquake, the jailer appeared to be free while Paul and Silas were imprisoned. The jailer's relationship with Paul and Silas would have also been one of power and dominance over his prisoners. Following the earthquake, it all changed. Paul and Silas were set free physically, but the jailer was set free spiritually—along with his household. The text tells us that the jailer "washed their wounds" and "he brought them up into his house and set food before them." In all, the account depicts how the gospel radically transforms our human relationships as well as our relationship with God.

APPLY

Questions 7-9 all require a level of vulnerability this week. Depending on your group, it may be helpful for you, as the facilitator, to go first in answering.

7. Three strikingly different people respond to the gospel in Philippi and begin to form the church there. If you're a follower of Jesus, how does your own story of coming to faith also illustrate how God draws people of different backgrounds in different ways through the same gospel message of Jesus?

This question intends to emphasize how there is no "preferred candidate" or list of prerequisites to qualify for God's salvation. Hopefully your own stories can help emphasize that point.

8. Like the jailer, it's possible to be in bondage but think you're free. Was there ever a time in your life prior to coming to faith where you thought you were "free" but were really enslaved in some way? If so, share your story with the group.

9. We all know that life's circumstances can be restrictive and difficult. What can we learn from Paul and Silas' example about our freedom to praise and worship God at all times?

This question isn't written in a way that forces people to share deeply, but it could be an invitation for people to talk about a difficult past or current situation. Some may find this too personal, but it could be a good question for helping create a sense of safety and trust within your group as you lean to share about difficulties.

10. What else did you find significant, challenging, or encouraging from this week's sermon?