

1. Motivate

When have you questioned following the recommendation of your GPS?

- when it wants to send me off of a new highway (and shows me driving in a field)
- when it hits a dead end
- when you know a better way
- when it seems to be set on giving the shortest route, but not the easiest route
- when I'm getting off the Interstate road to have a meal and it wants me to get back on

2. Transition

Your GPS may try to interrupt your trip.

- But God's leading in life is always better and wiser than a GPS
- God may interrupt your "trip" to move your service for Him in a new direction.

3. Bible Study

3.1 A Season of Waiting

A video introduction to the lesson is available. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/5kfkxttc> to view. If you don't have wi-fi where you teach, you need to download the video file from <https://tinyurl.com/ytkh9pps>

Listen for church growth.

Acts 16:4-5 (NIV) As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Note the decrees or decisions alluded to and being delivered to the cities Paul and his companions visited.

- Previous to this, certain factions in the early church were known as Judaizers
- They advocated that believers in Christ (Christians) must also abide by Jewish customs (sacrifices, circumcision, etc.)
- The disciples along with Paul had met together and made it clear that only faith in Christ was required for salvation.
- Paul and his ministry companions were sharing these decisions to churches they visited

What words and phrases show that God was working through them to the benefit of the churches they visited?

- the churches were strengthened in the faith
- the churches grew daily in numbers
- note that today we would consider growth in members per month or per year – they were saying "daily"

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When Doing God's Work Is Interrupted

What does it mean for a church to be "strengthened in the faith"? How does that look in practice today?

- teaching and explaining God's Word
- encouraging the believers
- challenging the believers
- supporting one another in prayer and practical help
- demonstrating how to put God first in your life
- living out the "love your neighbor" element of our faith

Why is it important for churches to follow the decisions and teachings rooted in Scripture?

- Scripture is God's messages to us
- God has chosen to let the world know about Him through the written Word
- God has preserved His Truth in written form over centuries
- It has survived and been collected and speaks to us today
- God's Word is powerful in what it communicates even after centuries

How can we be intentional about strengthening others in their walk with Christ?

- faithful preaching and teaching
- regular gatherings for study and communication of Truth
- worshipping together
- show people how to study God's Word
- admonishing, encouraging, challenging, exhorting God's Truth

What contributed to those churches increasing numerically? What would the explanation of the "decisions" have to do with the growth?

- you didn't have to be a Jew to be a Christian
- no circumcision
- there were often "God fearers" who worshiped Jehovah, the God of the Jews
- they appreciated what they know about God, but didn't necessarily want to become Jews
- now they realized they could become Christians by faith in Christ alone

3.2 God May Change the Course

Listen for God's change of plan.

Acts 16:6-10 (NIV) Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

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When Doing God's Work Is Interrupted

What caused them to make changes to their itinerary?

- they were "kept by the Holy Spirit" in one case, another verse says "The Spirit of Jesus"
- in the night Paul had a vision/dream of a man of Macedonia asking for help

Why do you think the Holy Spirit prevented Paul and his companions from preaching in certain areas?

- could have been dangerous areas
- God knew where there would be positive response to the Gospel message
- the people in Macedonia were in greater need

Imagine a time when your plans are clearly redirected by God. What might that feel like?

- could be discouraging at first ... you thought you knew where you should be going
- could be a relief ... you just weren't sure about your plans when God redirected
- it may feel like mental "whiplash" – a great surprise
- maybe you would be excited ... this is something new ... an "adventure" from God

What does this passage teach us about being flexible in ministry?

- don't think that you know best
- God does know best ... and He might not always tell you why
- we should always determine where God is leading and follow Him
- maybe God allows you to try different types of ministry, then opens a door of opportunity that is obviously His plans ... for that time
- later on He might lead you in a different direction

How can we discern when a "closed door" is actually God's guidance?

- when it feels like you're "beating your head against a stone wall"
- you try a few more times to go in a certain direction and it is just not working out
- in addition to being blocked, God communicates to you through a scripture passage or by advice or suggestion from someone else
- when along with the closed door, God opens up another opportunity, a new door

What role did Paul's vision play in confirming God's direction?

- twice his plans to go in a certain geographical direction were halted by God
- then God gives a suggestion of the vision/dream, this is the open door God is suggesting

How does God guide us today?

- sometimes by Scripture – a verse or passage seems to hit you straight on
- other times by the Holy Spirit giving you an idea, an urging, an impression
- one door closes, another opens
- you've been involved in certain spiritual ministry (or even vocation) and it is working well, positive reinforcement from God
- other times something may be going well and God communicates to you somehow, that He is heading you in a different direction

3.3 God Opens New Opportunities

Listen for an open door of ministry.

Acts 16:11-15 (NIV) From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. 12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district 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 named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who 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.

What can we learn from Lydia's openness and hospitality?

- a businesswoman
- a worshiper of God – a “God-fearer”
- God opened her heart to respond to Paul's message
- she and members of her household were baptized
- invited Paul and his companions to her home

How does God prepare hearts to receive the gospel, as He did with Lydia?

- events in one's life cause a longing for something better, different
- God plants thoughts in their mind that motivate them to be receptive to the Gospel
- a conversation with someone gets the person thinking in a direction that is positive towards the Gospel message
- a person becomes so fed up with the direction of his/her life that they welcome a new direction
- a combination of all these things
- in some primitive cultures, missionaries find that God has planted in that culture the idea of the “One true God” which they are looking to for revelation – in some cases for multiple generations

What does Lydia's conversion teach us about influence and impact in ministry?

- God is the one who convicts/convinces of Truth
- He often prepares the way
- our task is to communicate, to share His Truth

How can we be more open to unexpected opportunities to share the gospel?

- be ready with your “Fifteen Second Testimony” link
- have a “Four Spiritual Laws” or something similar with you to use whenever God opens up an opportunity

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week's lesson.



Family Discussion Guide

Application

Seek God's will.

- Set aside time this week to evaluate your spiritual life.
- Ask God to reveal His will to you in specific areas of your life.
- Pray about some type of ministry you need to get involved with in your church.
- Read Proverbs 3:5-6 and meditate on this spiritual principle for your life.

Stay spiritually attuned.

- In every situation you are in, pay attention to the possibility of a gospel opportunity.
- Take time to review some key Bible passages you might use to share the gospel.
- Always be consciously surrendered to the Spirit's leading and power (1 Cor. 2:3-5).

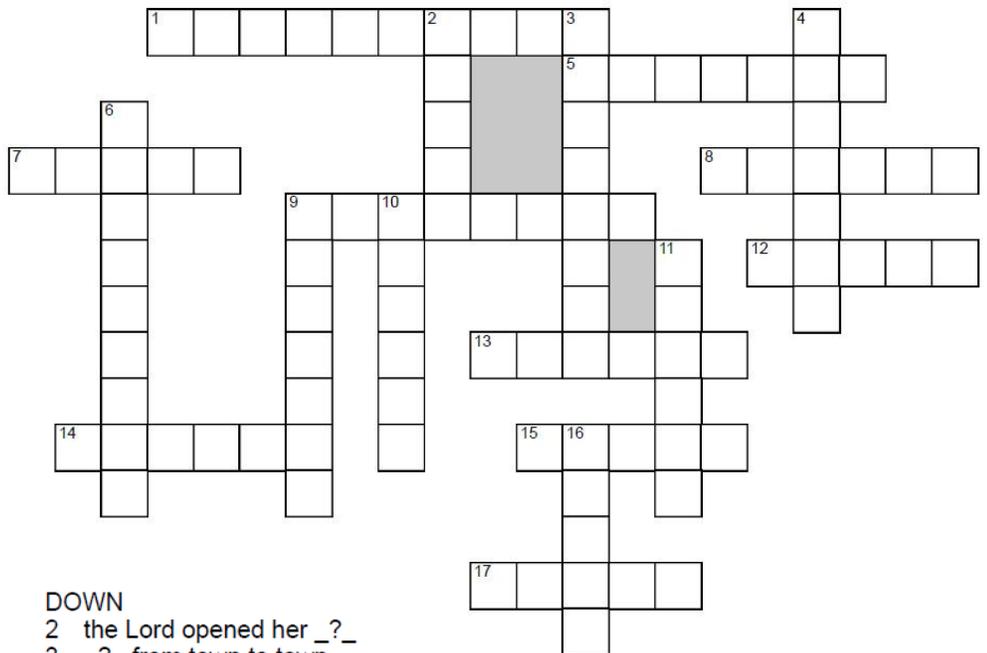
Tell others about Jesus.

- Read Romans 10:14-15.
- Lydia heard the gospel from Paul and God opened her heart to believe.
- That's the pattern God uses.
- Who can you tell about Jesus this week?

Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

- 1 traveled _?_ the region
- 5 decisions _?_ by the apostles
- 7 we got _?_ at once
- 8 called us to _?_ the gospel
- 9 members of her household were _?_
- 12 strengthened in the _?_
- 13 apostles and _?_ in Jerusalem
- 14 had a _?_ of a man
- 15 grew _?_ in numbers
- 17 went down to _?_



DOWN

- 2 the Lord opened her _?_
- 3 _?_ from town to town
- 4 stayed there _?_ days
- 6 come over to _?_ and help us
- 9 standing and _?_ him
- 10 find a place of _?_
- 11 dealer in _?_ cloth
- 16 would not _?_ them to

Remember, the clues and words are taken from Acts 16:4-15 (NIV)

