



**The Holy Spirit Guides and Empowers
Prayer and the Truth
Acts 16:11-15, 40**

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul (Acts 16:14—ESV).

When Paul began his missionary journeys, he went first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. In Philippi, he went to a riverside outside the city on the Sabbath where he hoped to find Jews meeting to pray without the noise and interruptions in a city dominated by pagans.

At the river he met Lydia and other women who worshiped God. There, Paul gave his testimony about Jesus. Notice especially the power of prayer and praying together. Paul was a man of prayer, speaking to women who were women of prayer. Together, they sought to worship and obey God, so they prayed.

Paul prayed and spoke as the Lord led him. In answer to the prayers of those seeking God's will, some responded to the leading of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Lord opened Lydia's *heart* to pay attention, not just hear words as Paul spoke. The Holy Spirit led and empowered Paul as he spoke the truth of God about Jesus according to the Hebrew

Scriptures, perhaps in a way similar to the message Paul heard from Stephen before he approved of Stephen's stoning and death. The Holy Spirit helped Lydia hear, understand, and believe the good news that Paul proclaimed. She came to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, who would save her, her family, and all who would believe in Him. She wanted to obey the One who had lived and died to save her from her sins; the One who loved her and spoke to her heart. In obedience to Paul and the command of Jesus, she was baptized, committing herself to follow Jesus wherever He led.

God had led Paul to her, so she wanted to learn more about Jesus from Paul and help others as Jesus had helped her. As the Holy Spirit led her, she invited Paul to stay at her home while he reached out to others with the good news he preached. She humbly asked Paul, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay" (Acts 16:15). Paul stayed with her family until events surrounding his ministry led to his imprisonment (see Acts 16:16–24). When Paul was released, he went back to Lydia's home, met with those who had come to trust in Jesus, and then departed for Thessalonica (see Acts 17).

As we pray and read the Bible, the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to God's truth, leads us to obey Jesus, and empowers us to bless others in His name.