

Paul's Second Missionary Journey



Topic

The Spirit's leading

Theme

All believers should be sensitive to the Spirit's leading in their lives.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will determine a regular time and place to study the Scriptures and seek the Spirit's leading for his life.

Materials

• Resource 1, 2, 10, and 13

Scripture Focus

Acts 15:36–18:22

Summary

Lesson 10 includes the activities and travels of Paul and his team on his second missionary journey, the call into Macedonia, and the importance of truth in the work of the gospel.

Outline

I. Stage One of the Journey (15:36–16:5)

- A. Preparation for ministry (15:36–40)
- B. Departure (15:41–16:5)

II. Stage Two of the Journey (16:6–18:22)

- A. Call into Macedonia (16:6–10)
 - 1. Direction of the Holy Spirit (16:6–8)
 - 2. The vision of the Macedonian (16:9, 10)
- B. Ministry in Philippi (16:11–40)
 - 1. Conversion of Lydia (16:14, 15)
 - 2. Expulsion of a demon (16:16–18)
 - 3. Salvation of the Philippian jailer (16:19–40)
- C. The ministry in Thessalonica (17:1–9)
- D. The ministry at Berea (17:10–15)
- E. The ministry at Athens (17:16–34)
- F. The ministry at Corinth and trip home (18:1–22)

Memory Verse

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them” (Acts 16:25).

GETTING STARTED

Making Decisions

ASK: What various methods or processes do people use to make decisions? (Q1)

ASK: What methods or processes do you tend to use? (Q2)

Paul and Silas continued to follow the Holy Spirit on their second missionary journey. At times the Spirit was very intentional in His leading. God expects us to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading too.

Decision-Making Testimony

Invite one or two of your learners to share a testimony on how God led them in making a particularly hard decision.

Share that today's lesson will look at Paul's second missionary journey and address how believers can rely on the Holy Spirit's leading in their daily lives and many daily decisions.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Stage One of the Journey (Acts 15:36–16:5)

After the Jerusalem council affirmed the essentials of the gospel message, Paul took the message to new areas of the world.

A. Preparation for ministry (15:36–40)

As Paul and Barnabas planned their second missionary journey, they disagreed over John Mark. Apparently the church agreed with Paul, since Luke wrote in 15:40 that Paul and Silas were *being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God*. The church selected Paul and Silas for this second missionary journey. Luke mentioned neither Barnabas nor John Mark again. However, Paul wrote in a positive manner about both John Mark (2 Tim. 4:11) and Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:6).

ASK: Why do you suppose God did not make it clear to both Paul and Barnabas what they should do about John Mark? (Q3) *Perhaps He was leading them through their disagreement. God wanted them to form two teams instead of one.*

Paul made a wise choice when he chose Silas to accompany him. Silas was an official representative at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:22), a Roman citizen (16:37), and a prophet (15:32). The church at Antioch knew him well. In addition, he was well trained in Greek, as evidenced by his serving as Peter's secretary (1 Pet. 5:12).

B. The departure (15:41–16:5)

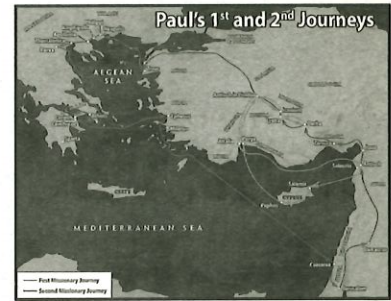
Some Bible scholars conjecture that around April AD 50, Paul and Silas began the second missionary journey, which lasted over three years and covered over three thousand miles. They first traveled north by foot and visited the churches in Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41).

MAP: Display resource 10. Point out the places of Paul's second missionary journey as you cover them in class.

In Acts 16 Luke made a point of mentioning Timothy, who joined their group in Lystra (16:1). Timothy's conversion may have occurred during Paul's first missionary journey. Luke identified Timothy as a disciple (16:1); Paul identified him as a son in the faith (1 Cor. 4:17), a fellow worker (Rom. 16:21), and a *co-sender* of several Epistles (2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1). Timothy had a godly heritage through his Jewish mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). But his father was a Greek. Evidently Timothy had not, therefore, been circumcised.

Paul always presented the gospel first to the Jews. He wanted nothing to hinder Timothy's ministry with them, so he desired to remove any unnecessary barriers for the Jews' reception of Timothy. He instructed Timothy to be circumcised (Acts 16:3). Timothy obeyed Paul. First and foremost, Timothy desired to remove any barrier that might limit his ministry.

RESOURCE: Display resource 2 to point out Luke's update on the growth of church in Acts 16:5.



II. Stage Two of the Journey (Acts 16:6–18:22)

A. The call into Macedonia (16:6–10)

1. Direction of the Holy Spirit (16:6–8)

Throughout Acts, Luke stressed the sovereign leading and empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit.

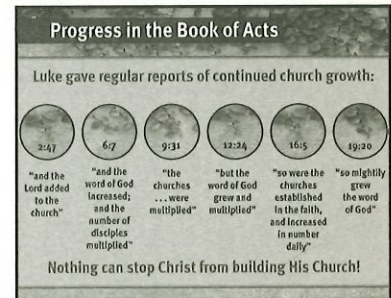
READ: Acts 16:6, 7. **ASK:** The Holy Spirit told Paul and Silas where not to go. What does this discovery reveal to you both about the believer who seeks God's will and about the Holy Spirit? (Q4) *The believer should continue on the path of God's revealed will until God Himself stops the believer. The Holy Spirit doesn't always use positive directions, such as yes and go, to direct believers. Sometimes He says no and stop.*

Notice that Luke used such phrases as *forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia* and the *Spirit suffered them not* to go into Bithynia. The Spirit was closing obvious doors of ministry to prepare Paul and Silas for a much greater ministry.

Paul and Silas's missionary team had nowhere else to go when they arrived at Troas on the coast.

ASK: How do you think Paul felt about this roadblock? (Q5) *This leading of the Spirit must have puzzled Paul.*

ASK: Has God used a roadblock to direct your service for Him? What were the circumstances? (Q6)

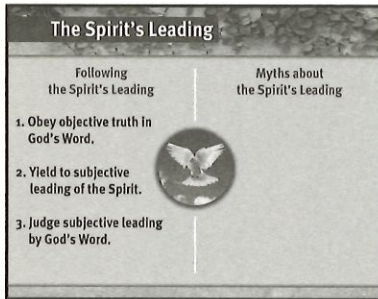


2. The vision of the Macedonian (16:9, 10)

READ: Acts 16:9, 10. **ASK:** When the team had nowhere else to go, what did the Spirit reveal to Paul? (Q7) *Through a vision the Spirit revealed where to go. He directed Paul to go into Macedonia.*

Not until they arrived in Troas did Paul receive the vision and call into Macedonia. Paul would take the gospel into a new area of the world.

RESOURCE: Display resource 13 as you discuss what the Spirit's leading involves.



While believers today should not expect the Spirit to lead them through dreams and visions, they nonetheless should expect the Spirit to lead them. The Spirit's leading involves: (1) obedience to objective truth in the Scriptures, the Spirit's word, (2) yielding to the subjective leading and prompting of the Spirit, and (3) judging subjective leading by God's Word.

When we feel subjective leading or prompting, we should judge it by objective truth. We can easily convince ourselves that we feel something because the Holy Spirit has made us feel that way (e.g., *I have peace about doing this*). The Word of God, however, may forbid the very thing we feel led to do (e.g., leave a spouse for another person). Thus we must always temper subjective leading with objective truth (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21) and with counsel from godly mentors (Heb. 5:14).

READ: 2 Corinthians 8:16, 17. **ASK:** How did God lead Titus in this passage? (Q8) *God burdened the heart of Titus. This burden is an example of the Spirit's subjective leading.*

B. The ministry in Philippi (16:11–40)

The missionary team entered Philippi around the summer of AD 50. As a Roman colony, Philippi had special privileges, such as lower taxes and more freedom to self-rule. As a strategic city, Philippi contained many former or retired Roman officers and soldiers. Perhaps that is why the city had so few Jews and no synagogues (16:13).

Luke gave three snapshots of events that demonstrated the ministry of the Spirit and the church's progress.

1. Conversion of Lydia (16:14, 15)

The Lord opened Lydia's heart to respond to the gospel when she heard it (16:14). The Spirit took His Word and uniquely worked in her life to bring her to salvation. After her conversion Lydia shared her faith through a public testimony of baptism, as well as through the use of her wealth to minister to Paul and his company (16:15).

ASK: Would you say that Paul went where God was working or God worked where Paul went? Explain. (Q9) *Paul went where God was working. God does not wait for believers to make a move. He is at work in the lives of the lost and directs believers to them.*

2. Expulsion of a demon (16:16–18)

A slave girl possessed by a demon followed Paul and caused a disturbance, so Paul expelled the demon (16:16–18). Specifically, the girl said, *These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation*. However, neither the term *salvation* nor *most high God* was uniquely Jewish. Either could have been used to define a Greco-Roman god. In addition, the phrase *shew unto us the way of salvation* could well be translated as *shew unto us a way of salvation*. Only one way of access to God exists: Jesus alone (John 14:6). So Paul became incensed at the slave girl's alteration of the gospel message, and he exorcized the demon.

3. Salvation of the Philippian jailer (16:19–40)

Acts 16:19–40 recounts the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household. In this well-known account, Luke illustrated again the sovereign ministry of the Spirit.

READ: Acts 16:22–25. **ASK:** How did Paul and Silas respond when the Spirit's leading included a beating and a night in jail? (Q10) *They rejoiced in the Lord by singing to God and praying to Him.*

ASK: How should we respond when the Spirit leads us into deep waters? (Q11) *We ought to respond to God's leading with joy too.*

Immediately following his conversion, the jailer ceased to treat Paul as a prisoner and attended his wounds. The conversion of the jailer was another example of God's divinely leading his missionaries.

Paul and Silas were released when the magistrates found out they were Roman citizens.

C. The ministry in Thessalonica (17:1–9)

Most likely Paul ministered in Thessalonica from late fall AD 50 to midwinter AD 51. The journey from Philippi to Thessalonica covered about one hundred miles. Luke's reference to *three sabbath days* (17:2) most likely means Paul ministered to the Jews for three weeks and then went to the Gentiles. The Philippian church sent him money at least twice while he ministered in Thessalonica. So it makes sense that he stayed there longer than three weeks.

During the time of Paul's ministry in Thessalonica, the church there became an example to all the other churches in the region (1 Thess. 1:6–10) because when they *received the word of God, they received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe* (1 Thess. 2:13).

D. The ministry at Berea (17:10–15)

After fleeing Thessalonica because of persecution, Paul traveled about fifty miles to Berea, where he ministered in early AD 51. Luke described the Jews of Berea as *more noble than those in Thessalonica* (17:11). These Jews met daily to consider and compare Paul's teaching with Scripture.

The Bereans' example clearly illustrates the importance of each individual's properly interpreting the Word of God. The apostles never taught that one single per-

son, group of persons, or church should or would mediate the interpretation process of Scripture. Everyone is personally responsible to interpret the Scriptures properly.

Central to every believer's interpreting the Scriptures is the priesthood of the believer. Every believer whether male, female, rich, poor has direct access to God.

E. The ministry at Athens (17:16–34)

Paul ministered in Athens from sometime near late winter through, perhaps, the middle of early spring AD 51. While Athens had reached its prime in 400 BC, people still considered it the cultural and intellectual center of the Roman Empire.

While he stayed in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him, Paul was stirred, or provoked, by the extent of the idolatry in the city (17:16). Nevertheless, Paul reasoned daily with the Jews, with God-fearing Gentiles called *devout persons*, and even with Stoic and Epicurean philosophers who met him in the market (17:17).

The Epicureans (17:18) followed the teachings of Epicurus (341–270 BC). They believed men should pursue tranquility, freedom from pain, and removal of fear, especially the fear of death. The Epicureans also believed that life after death does not exist. While they did not deny the existence of gods, they saw no relationship between gods and humanity. They were the forefathers of modern utilitarianism.

ASK: Compare the Epicureans' pursuit of tranquility and freedom from pain and fear to Paul's life as a Spirit-led missionary. (Q12) *As a Spirit-led missionary, Paul endured beatings, imprisonments, long hours, and numerous terrors.*

ASK: What approach to life would yield true joy? (Q13) *Paul experienced far more joy than any of the Epicureans. They ultimately experienced disappointment and dissatisfaction in life without God.*

Paul eventually spoke before the Areopagus (17:19). *Areopagus* described both Mars Hill and a council that oversaw religious, moral, and educational matters. As Paul addressed this body, he began with the creation they could all see and experience: the one Creator, sovereign God (17:24–26); repentance (17:27–30); resurrection from the dead (17:31–34). Many of these philosophers rejected Paul and the gospel message.

F. The ministry at Corinth and trip home (18:1–22)

Paul traveled approximately fifty miles from Athens into Corinth sometime in early spring AD 51. He continued his ministry in Corinth until perhaps late summer AD 52. While in Corinth, he wrote two epistles. He likely wrote 1 Thessalonians in the early summer of AD 51 and 2 Thessalonians in late summer AD 51.

The city of Corinth served as the capital of the Achaia province and was well known for immorality and pagan worship. These vices resulted from its strategic seaport location, a large population of around 200,000 people, and the temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love.

Corinth was so well known for immorality that people used the term *Corinthianize* to mean *be sexually immoral at Corinth*. In addition, the Greek gods Apollo, the god of the city, and Asclepius, Greek god of healing, played an enormous role.

Corinth was a major port city of commerce. Between its western port in Lech-

aem and its eastern port in Cenchrea, a small land bridge existed just three and a half miles wide at its narrowest point. Cargo, and at times even ships, could be transported across this small land bridge.

Along with this east-west passage was an abundant opportunity for immorality as sailors waited for the transport of cargo and ships. It was in this important but wicked city that Paul endeavored to plant a church. He worked as a tentmaker with Aquila and Priscilla so he would not be accused of trying to make money off the gospel (18:1–3). On the Sabbaths, Paul spent time reasoning with both Jews and Greeks in the synagogue. When Silas and Timothy arrived, Paul devoted himself to the ministry of preaching (18:4, 5).

READ: Acts 18:5, 6. **ASK:** How successful was Paul at reaching the Jews? (Q14) *The Jews rejected Paul's message.*

ASK: Why should we never feel like a failure in ministry when we are sensitive to and following the Spirit's leading? (Q15) *Our job is to follow God's leading and to serve Him faithfully. If we are doing that, then we should not feel discouraged when we don't see positive results. God does not always bring a bountiful harvest as we serve Him.*

Paul turned his focus to the Gentiles in Corinth as the Jews continued to oppose him, especially after Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue trusted in Christ. The opposition must have shook Paul for the Lord appeared to him in a vision to encourage him (18:9, 10).

READ: Acts 18:9, 10. **ASK:** What does the Lord's message reveal about how Paul must have felt as he ministered in Corinth? (Q16) *Paul must have had a fear of being attacked for the Lord told him not to be afraid and to continue to preach.*


Paul did not let his fears control him. He obeyed the Lord and continued in Corinth for eighteen months (18:11). Eventually the Jews brought him before the bema seat and accused him of teaching people to worship God in a way that was contrary to the law (18:12, 13). But before Paul had a chance to answer his accusers, Gallio, the proconsul, threw the case out (18:14–17).

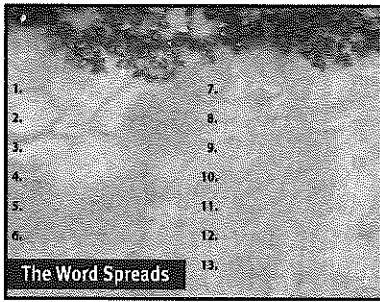
Paul returned to the church at Antioch in late fall AD 52. His second missionary journey had come to an end. The Spirit led him through triumph and trial, yet Paul remained faithful to the Lord by depending on the Spirit Who led him.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

The Spirit's Leading

RESOURCE: Display resource 13. Review the three points to keep in mind when following the Spirit's leading. **ASK:** What are some myths about the Spirit's leading that Paul's example shows are not true? (Q17) (Record learners' answers on the resource.) *The Spirit always leads us to comfortable situations; we can trust our emotions as an indication of the Spirit's leading; we will always find success when we follow the Spirit's leading.*

The Spirit's Leading	
Following the Spirit's Leading	Myths about the Spirit's Leading
1. Obey objective truth in God's Word.	
2. Yield to subjective leading of the Spirit.	
3. Judge subjective leading by God's Word.	



Obedience and Yielding

Ask your learners to set a time and place to prayerfully study and to prayerfully consider the leading of the Spirit in regard to their lives. Encourage them to value obedience to God's Word and to humbly yield to the Spirit's leading, allowing God to direct them as He wishes. (Q18)

Review Resource

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: Be sensitive to the Spirit's leading.