

ACTS – Fall 2025 D-Groups

For Wednesday, November 5th

Acts 16:1-18:23



The Big Picture - ACTS as a Whole

Acts 16–18 represents one of the most dynamic stretches in the book, capturing the expansion of Paul’s missionary ministry into Europe. What began in Antioch and Asia Minor now reaches Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth; the Gospel continues to move and expand the Kingdom, crossing borders, cultures, and worldviews.

At this point in Acts, Paul and his team is guided by the Spirit in remarkable ways. The “Macedonian call” (16:9–10) shifts their direction from Asia to Europe, showing that God is actively steering His mission. This is not just human strategy or ambition—it’s divine orchestration. Each new city presents both opportunity and opposition, yet God continues to build His church through faithful witnesses and unexpected converts.

These chapters highlight both the diversity and the unity of the gospel’s power. Lydia, a successful businesswoman; a slave girl oppressed by a spirit; a hardened jailer; skeptical philosophers in Athens; and working-class tradesmen in Corinth—all encounter the same life-changing message of Jesus. The gospel breaks into every level of society and every kind of heart. It’s interesting to see, especially in his message at the Areopagus (17:22-34), how Paul uses even the city’s own culture, altars, and poets as a starting point to deliver them the truth of the Gospel of Jesus.

Paul’s journeys also demonstrate endurance amid challenge. He and Silas face beatings, imprisonment, public ridicule, and rejection, yet each trial becomes an open door, again, for the gospel to expand the Kingdom. The Spirit’s presence is evident through courage and fruitfulness in the midst of adversity. By the time Paul returns to Antioch in 18:22, the church has been firmly planted across both Asia and Europe, and the mission Jesus began continues to multiply through ordinary people empowered by His Spirit.

We may not be missionaries like Paul. We may not feel called to North Africa or Central India, but we have much to learn from how Paul went about his task. Jesus calls us to “go and make disciples” and that’s what Paul did. He went to people who were willing and people who weren’t willing to listen. We need to preach the gospel wherever we are to whomever we are around and, like Paul, trust the Holy Spirit to guide us as we preach *The* gospel, in a way that our community can hear and understand.

The Close-Up for November 5th - Acts 16:1-18:23

Please make sure you read the passage, perhaps even 2-3 times using different versions. We want to provide supplemental material, but what matters most is actually interacting with God’s word.

Some notes on the overall flow of this section:

- **16:1–5** – Paul meets Timothy in Lystra, a young disciple with a strong reputation among believers. Paul invites him to join the mission, and they strengthen the churches together. This partnership shows the value of mentoring and generational ministry. In our call to make disciples, like Paul, we should take people with us on the journey.
- **16:6–10** – The group is “kept by the Holy Spirit” from preaching in certain regions until Paul receives a vision of a man from Macedonia calling for help. This moment redirects their journey to Europe—a defining turn in the story of Acts.
- **16:11–34** – In Philippi, Paul meets Lydia, a worshiper of God and successful businesswoman. She becomes the first recorded European convert and opens her home as a meeting place for the church. Then Paul and Silas cast out a spirit from a slave girl, which leads to their arrest and beating. Yet in prison, their worship and prayers lead to an earthquake, the jailer’s conversion, and an entire household baptized. What looked like defeat turns into deliverance. It didn’t really matter where life took him; Paul preached Jesus where ever he happened to find himself.
- **17:1–9** – In Thessalonica, Paul reasons from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. Many believe, but opposition rises from jealous leaders, forcing them to flee. The charge against them—“These men who have turned the world

upside down”—is actually a perfect summary of Acts, similar to 4:13 where it was noted that these were “unschooled, ordinary men” who had “been with Jesus.” When we spend time with Jesus, we will turn the world upside down by loving those around us into a relationship with Him.

- **17:10–15** – In Berea, the people were examining the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true. A good example for all of us to take responsibility to search the word to see if what *our* teachers say is true.
- **17:16–34** – In Athens, Paul engages with philosophers at the Areopagus. Surrounded by idols, he connects their spiritual searching to the truth of the “unknown God” and even quotes their own poets to point to Jesus. What can this teach us about the need to contextualize the gospel to our community?
- **18:1–17** – In Corinth, Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers, and works alongside them while preaching. God encourages him in a vision to stay despite opposition. Over time, many Corinthians believe and are baptized, including Crispus, the synagogue leader.
- **18:18–22** – After strengthening the believers and establishing churches, Paul returns to Antioch, completing his second missionary journey. What began with one vision in Troas now spans an entire continent.

Some of our Key Themes specifically on display in this section:

- **The Spirit’s Guidance** – God leads His people not only by opening doors but also by closing them. The Macedonian vision shows divine direction in mission.
- **The Reach of the Gospel/Kingdom Expansion** – From Jewish synagogues to pagan temples and Roman prisons, the same message transforms lives in every setting.
- **The Good News** – Paul’s sermons show how the gospel fulfills God’s promises. The Word remains central to mission. Paul’s sermon in Athens demonstrates sensitivity to culture and creativity in sharing the gospel without compromising truth.
- **Mission and Community** – Paul’s relationship with Timothy, Silas, Priscilla, and Aquila reveals the importance of training and teamwork in gospel ministry.

Some additional questions to reflect on leading-up to next week’s D-Group:

- How does the Spirit’s redirection of Paul’s journey (the Macedonian call) challenge your own view of guidance and obedience?
- What do you notice about the different kinds of people who come to faith in this section? What does this teach us about the gospel’s reach?
- How does Lydia’s example shape your view of hospitality and generosity in the church?
- What stands out to you about Paul and Silas worshiping while imprisoned? How does their example influence how you view suffering?
- What does the reaction in Thessalonica (“these men have turned the world upside down”) reveal about the impact of the gospel?
- Why were the Bereans commended, and how can we imitate their approach to Scripture today?
- How does Paul’s approach in Athens teach us to engage thoughtfully and respectfully with our own culture? How can we thoughtfully point people in the Springfield area to Jesus?
- What can we learn from God’s encouragement to Paul in Corinth? How does this speak to perseverance in ministry?
- How does the partnership between Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla model teamwork in faith and mission?
- What does this section reveal about how the gospel both comforts and confronts the world?
- How can we continue to point to Jesus and teach the gospel when people around are antagonistic?

A Challenge for this Week: Ask God to open your eyes to where He might be calling you next—perhaps not across the ocean, but across the street. Pray for a heart that listens to His Spirit, a willingness to cross boundaries for the sake of the gospel, and the courage to rejoice even when obedience leads to hardship.