

Acts 29 – Week 6 – Divine Guidance – Bible Study Helps

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores Paul's second missionary journey as recorded in Acts, highlighting the challenges and victories experienced in spreading the Gospel. It emphasizes the importance of following God's leading, being willing to face persecution for Christ, and the power of the Gospel to transform lives. The sermon underscores the urgency of sharing the Gospel message and the various responses people have to it, from acceptance to rejection.

Key Points:

- God's timing and direction are perfect, even when doors seem closed
- Believers should be willing to endure hardship for the sake of the Gospel
- The importance of baptism and immediate obedience following salvation
- The transformative power of the Gospel in individuals' lives
- The necessity of boldly proclaiming the Gospel message, even in hostile environments
- Different responses to the Gospel: acceptance, rejection, and delayed rejection
- The role of wisdom and strategy in missionary work

Scripture Reference:

- Acts 16-17

Stories:

- Lydia's conversion and baptism in Philippi
- Paul and Silas' imprisonment and the jailer's conversion
- Paul's encounter with philosophers in Athens and his speech at Mars Hill
- The story of Timothy joining Paul's missionary team and being circumcised
- The opposition faced in Thessalonica and Berea from unbelieving Jews

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Discipleship and Small Group Guide

Opening Prayer

Key Takeaways:

1. God's timing is always perfect, even when circumstances seem challenging.
2. Every day can be a missionary journey if we're open to God's leading.
3. The early church faced opposition, particularly from unbelieving Jews, but persevered in spreading the Gospel.
4. The Apostle Paul adapted his approach to reach different audiences while maintaining the core message of Christ crucified and God's judgment to come.

Discussion Questions:

1. The sermon mentions how Paul and Silas didn't immediately reveal they were Roman citizens when imprisoned. How can patience and strategic thinking be beneficial in our Christian walk?
2. Reflect on the story of Lydia and the jailer in Philippi. How do their immediate responses to salvation challenge our own attitudes towards obedience and service?
3. The Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures daily. How can we cultivate this habit in our own lives? Why is it important?
4. Paul's speech at Mars Hill (Areopagus) adapted to his audience while maintaining the Gospel message. How can we apply this approach in sharing our faith today?
5. The sermon emphasizes that rejection is a normal part of sharing the Gospel. How can we maintain courage and perseverance in the face of mockery or indifference?

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Practical Applications:

1. This week, try to view your daily routines as "missionary journeys." Look for opportunities to share Christ's love in your normal environments.
2. Practice studying a passage of Scripture daily, following the Bereans' example. Share your insights with the group next week.
3. Identify one area in your life where you might need to be more patient and trust God's timing. Commit to praying about this daily.
4. Think of someone in your life who might be open to hearing about Jesus. Brainstorm how you might adapt your approach to best reach them, like Paul did in Athens.
5. As a group, consider planning a local outreach activity where you can practice sharing the Gospel together.

Closing Prayer

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Discipleship Questions

How can we apply Paul's approach of 'becoming all things to all people' in our modern context without compromising our faith?

What can we learn from the Bereans about how to approach and study Scripture in our daily lives?

How might Paul's experience in Athens inform our approach to sharing the gospel in intellectually diverse or skeptical environments?

In what ways can we prepare ourselves to face opposition and persecution for our faith, as Paul and his companions did?

How can we discern when to stay and endure hardship in a place of ministry, and when to move on to a new location, as Paul often had to decide?

What lessons can we draw from Paul's willingness to suffer for the gospel, and how might this challenge our own comfort-seeking tendencies?

How can we cultivate the kind of boldness Paul demonstrated in preaching, while still maintaining wisdom and sensitivity to our audience?

In what ways might God be using the 'closed doors' or unexpected challenges in our lives to redirect us, as He did with Paul's team in Acts 16?

How can we balance the urgency of baptism seen in Acts with the importance of proper understanding and commitment in our modern church context?

What strategies can we employ to be 'missionary-minded' in our daily lives, seeing every interaction as an opportunity to share the gospel?

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Here's a 5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide

Day 1: God's Sovereign Guidance

Reading: Acts 16:6-10

Devotional: Just as Paul and his companions were guided by the Holy Spirit in their missionary journey, God continues to direct our paths today. Sometimes, like Paul, we may face closed doors or unexpected changes in direction. These moments aren't setbacks, but divine redirections. Reflect on a time when God closed a door in your life. How did it ultimately lead to something better? Today, pray for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's guidance in your life, even when it doesn't align with your plans. Remember, God's ways are higher than ours, and His plans are always for our good and His glory.

Day 2: The Power of Praise in Suffering

Reading: Acts 16:16-34

Devotional: Paul and Silas's response to imprisonment - singing hymns and praying - is a powerful testament to faith in adversity. Their praise wasn't dependent on circumstances, but on their unwavering trust in God. This faith not only sustained them but also became a powerful witness, leading to the jailer's salvation. In your own trials, how can you choose praise over complaint? Consider starting a "praise journal," writing down reasons to thank God even in difficult times. Remember, our praise can be a powerful testimony to others of God's faithfulness.

Day 3: Being Ready to Share the Gospel

Reading: Acts 17:16-34

Devotional: Paul's approach in Athens demonstrates the importance of being prepared to share our faith in any context. He was observant of the culture, found common ground, and boldly proclaimed the truth about Jesus. How prepared are you to share your faith? Take some time today to write out your testimony - how you came to faith and what Jesus means to you. Practice sharing it with a friend or family member. Pray for opportunities to engage with others about your faith, and for the courage to seize those moments when they come.

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Day 4: The Urgency of Salvation

Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:1-2, Acts 17:30-31

Devotional: Paul's message to the Athenians emphasized the urgency of responding to the Gospel. God's patience with our ignorance has a limit, and judgment is coming. This sobering truth should motivate us both in our own walk with God and in our efforts to reach others. Reflect on areas in your life where you might be procrastinating in obedience to God. What steps can you take today to align your life more fully with God's will? Pray for a renewed sense of urgency in living for Christ and sharing His love with others.

Day 5: Unity in Christ Amidst Diversity

Reading: Galatians 3:26-29, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Devotional: The early church brought together people from diverse backgrounds - Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women. This unity in Christ, transcending social and cultural barriers, was a powerful testimony to the transforming power of the Gospel. In our increasingly divided world, the church is called to be a beacon of unity in diversity. How can you actively work towards unity in your church and community? Pray for God to help you see and value the diversity within the body of Christ, and for the courage to build bridges where there are divisions.