



No.14 - Lydia - The business woman extraordinaire

Acts 16:6 - 40

Lydia was a woman very similar in many ways to Deborah. She was a very successful business woman who obviously had leadership talents. She was the leader of the prayer meeting who met by the riverside in Philippi. She was a woman who showed great concern and warm hospitality for the people of God. Like many other women there is not many verses written about this amazing woman and yet she has a profound effect on all our lives, as she is the lady that God used to bring the Gospel to Europe. Her work was the basis for the first Church, established by Paul in Philippi. This Church as we see later was a great sacrificial giver to Paul's work

(**Philippians 4:14-19**) and to other Churches being set up in Europe.

Lydia was a woman from Thyatira in Asia Minor, present day Turkey. She had moved to Philippi in order to be in a vital place for trade for selling the purple cloth she imported from her home town. . This costly cloth was worn by very wealthy people and Royalty. Philippi was such an important city in Macedonia, it connected the Middle East with Europe along the Roman Highway, the 'Via Egnatia'. It was the centre of commerce between the Aegean and Adriatic seas. She obviously felt that her new home would be strategic for furthering the success of her business. She was well respected and successful as a woman, very independent and obviously capable. She was no longer a young woman as she had been working for several years and built up a prosperous business with a large house and many servants.

Although a success Lydia realised she still needed God, and although she had many pressures she took time out to meet together with other women, to pray. Many others in Philippi were worshippers of Apollo. The Jewish law required that there be a population of at least ten Jewish men in order to set up a synagogue for public worship. The absence of a synagogue shows that there was a very small Jewish community, so the women met in a public place by the river.

"You can't walk with God until you worship Him."

Lydia worshiped God, **Acts 16:14**. This showed her recognition of her need for God, that despite all her worldly wealth, the luxury and happiness her lifestyle seemed to bring, she had a God shaped hole in her heart that she was keen to fill. Her worship of God did not mean she was a Christian as she did not have faith in God's Son, Jesus, until God opened her heart.

God brought His messenger Paul to the river at just the right time for Lydia. Paul was on his second missionary journey and certainly did not plan on going to Macedonia and the town of Philippi. Paul had thought God was guiding him to go to Asia to preach the Gospel, "they had been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the Word in Asia...they tried to enter.....the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them,..." **Acts 16:6-8**.

God really wanted to get the point through to Paul so He gave him a vision in the night of a man calling him to Macedonia. What amazing lengths God will go to bring everything together for so many people at the same time! Lydia like Deborah in her weekly faithfulness never recognised that she was in fact a world changer and a history maker. She was faithful to God in the little so He trusted her with much, the beginnings of the Church in Europe. So her small prayer meeting was visited by some unexpected guests, Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy. Because of her beautiful open spirit to the things of God "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message" **Acts 16:14**. He told the small group about how Jesus came to bridge the gap between God and man, and completely washed away the sin of the whole world. How by believing and receiving the very life of God they could have a whole new perspective on living. Lydia's relationship with God had been very superficial up until this time and she did not have a personal relationship, it was just religious, her way of getting to God rather than receiving God's free gift to her, in Christ. God could reach Lydia's heart easily because her heart was already set on God in worship, and open to His Word.

Luke 8:15 "But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word and retain it, and by persevering produce a good crop."

Lydia is a perfect example of this Word. She is so changed by the Truth (**John 8:32**) that it effects her whole household. When she takes the next step and makes a public display of her new faith at baptism (**Acts 16:15**) her whole household want to follow her leadership. They all say, 'I identify myself with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and I am going to begin a new life.' This is the start of the first Church in Philippi. Paul recognised God's direction for him, away from Asia, as this was the tiny cell of his future work in Europe, all through Lydia.

Immediately Lydia submitted her home to Christ and she “persuaded and begged” Paul and Silas to stay with her, so identifying herself with other believers. Even when they had been in prison she was not ashamed to be their friend and have them in her home along with many others, **Acts 16:40**.

Imagine if Paul came to an open air prayer meeting today, in the Western world, and told people they needed to believe God. So many would be offended and turn away from the Truth. People find the bondage of religious activity and good deeds, encourages them to believe that they are good enough. People think that being born again and full of the Holy Spirit is only for the fanatics. We need to respond just like Lydia and receive the Truth, bearing fruit in our life, (**Mark 4:15-20**) as the very life of the Holy Spirit is running through our spirit

Retirement?

Lydia is such a challenge to anyone, whatever age, who feels that their value and job in this life is finished, **Job 14:7**. If your job has come to an end or your physical ability is weaker. If you thought life was just going to be great and you were doing great things for God then you wake up one morning and realise it has all fallen like sand through your fingers. You maybe have had a horrendous set back in your situation, and you think there is no way forward, only to give up. Take a challenge and an encouragement from Lydia. This lady was on her own, she was not in a Church, not surrounded by much support, she maybe had been married and had no children at home, she was far from her home country (about 300miles), she was over worked with her business.

1. She was a worshipper, **Psalm 92:12-15; 2 Samuel 22:33-34**.
2. Open to receive from God, **Psalm 103:2-5; Hebrews 4:16; Psalm 23:3**
3. She surrendered to God, **Proverbs 10:27; Psalm 32:8**
4. She obeyed His Word, **Titus 2:2-3; Ephesians 3:16**
5. She was concerned for others, especially her household, **Psalm 48:14; Isaiah 44:3**
6. She gave all she had to God and His people, **Psalm 41:1-2; Philippians 4:16**
7. She looked at the bigger picture, **2 Corinthians 4:16,18; Isaiah 26:3**

When we are being tempted to give up and feel our life is finished we need to take an inventory of our spiritual condition and deal with pride, self-righteousness and unbelief. We may be cynical which has affected our relationship with God. Put the past behind, (**Philippians 3:12-16**) forgive all who have hurt us, disappointed us, or let us down, and take a new child-like fresh relationship with God. Take time to enjoy worship and just sit at His feet and allow Him to share all His plans for you (**Job 42:2; Jeremiah 29:11**)



This can be the best and most fruitful time of your life. It is certainly going to be the climax of history. Choose to be involved, surrender your all to the Father, however small that may seem to you, and watch what your Heavenly Father can do with clay in His hands, just like He did with Lydia. God’s purpose and plan for you is always the best. **God is not looking for ability just availability!**

No.14 - Lydia - The business woman extraordinaire - Challenge Questions

Read the notes "**Lydia - the business woman extraordinaire**"

1. What challenged you most about Lydia's move for business reasons, and how God used that for His Glory?

2. Do you agree with the point that worship opened Lydia's heart to God? How do you apply this principle in your own life?

3. If you are in a position of '**retirement**' in your Christian life what challenge and encouragement can you receive from the life of Lydia? Do you know anyone who feels they are on the ash-heap that you could encourage?
God needs EVERY person to complete the job in the earth, so Jesus can return. There is no retirement in the Kingdom of God. We can take 'long-service leave' but only to revive the fire in our heart for the things of God and enlarge our testimony of God's faithfulness.

4. Look up all the verses under retirement in the notes, which one really spoke to you?

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-21

5. What was Tamar's relationship to Amnon? Absalom? King David?

6. How did Amnon feel about Tamar and what effect did this have on him physically? (**2 Samuel 13:1-2**)

7. What question did his cousin Jonadab ask, and what advice did he give? (**2 Samuel 13:3-6**)

8. What do you think was David's involvement at this time? If he had been more involved with his family what would he have known? (**2 Samuel 13:6-7**)

9. What was Tamar's immediate reaction to Amnon's demand? (**2 Samuel 13:8-12**)

10. What answer to the problem did Tamar suggest? (**2 Samuel 13:13-14**)

11. After the rape what was Amnon's reaction? (**2 Samuel 13:15**)

12. What action did he take immediately? (**2 Samuel 13:16-17**)

13. Describe in single words how you think Tamar must have felt. Eg: dirty, used, rejected

14. What actions did she take? (**2 Samuel 13:18-19**)

15. Who came to her rescue? What advice did he give her? What did he do for her? (**2 Samuel 13:20-22**)

Read 2 Samuel 13:23-38

16. How long did Absalom wait to take his revenge? Who refused to go with Absalom but blessed him? (**2 Samuel 13:23-27**)

17. What orders did Absalom give and what was the result? Who was devastated? (**2 Samuel 13:28-38**)

18. Sum up in one short sentence what spoke to you in this chapter.