

# A Practical Study of ACTS:

## Take It To Them!

### “Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

#### Study Number Twelve – Acts 16:1-40

It was Pat Stave who said:

Stretched across the ocean I see a thousand hands,  
Tired, groping symbols of countless weary lands.  
Voices thin are wailing from o’er the ocean waves.  
Who will go to tell them our blessed Jesus saves?

Ignorance their captor and sin their chains of death.  
How can they escape them? “By Me,” the Savior saith.  
Quietly He whispers and asks us if we care.  
Love gives forth the answer, “I’ll go, Lord, send me there.”  
(source unknown)

The refreshing thing of the book of Acts is that they are not content to stay confined. They’re wanting to go out and to minister, to give of themselves to people.

It’s hard to find this today. We have a tendency to get comfortable in our little groups and to stay ingrown. And we tell people they can come to know Christ if they want to come and join our little group and get involved with us. But for us to take the initiative to go, that’s something else.

And that is not the thesis of the book of Acts. The book of Acts is a constant going, participating, being involved. We see these men moving out to preach and proclaim the message.

We have called this series “You Got to Take it to Them.” That is basically the message of the book.

Now what we have seen thus far is in Acts 13 and 14, Paul and Barnabas took a journey. John Mark went with them part of the way. When they got back they were hassled by a group of Jewish believers from Jerusalem at the church of Antioch that said that they needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses.

In our last study we witnessed the Jerusalem Council. At this Council it was an open forum for a period of debate. Peter spoke. James spoke. And then they came up with a decree that basically said the Gentiles are saved by grace through faith and faith alone.

The Law terminates its domination over us at the time we come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Now the chapter ended with a dissension. Actually what happened was, Paul was singing in the shower with Willie Nelson “On the Road Again” and Barnabas heard him and they decided they were going to go. And the only problem was Barnabas said, “I want to take John Mark with us.” And Paul just said, “No way. He is not going. He left us the first time

and I won't give him a second chance.”

Barnabas got very angry and so did Paul. Barnabas took John Mark and set sail for Cyprus—that's their home area—and this was the beginning of that first journey.

Paul waits in Antioch until Silas can come north from Jerusalem to join him. Silas was one of the visiting Bible teachers that the church in Jerusalem had sent up to Antioch after the Jerusalem Council. And Silas came north. They were blessed by the church in Antioch.

Then they headed north instead of going southwest to Cyprus and following in Barnabas and John Mark's footsteps, they go off in the opposite direction. They are basically heading home because Tarsus is about 150 miles northwest of the city of Antioch. So they're turning and heading back.

Probably they're in the city of Tarsus, still heading west as the scene of our study opens.

So let's pick up with Acts 16:1. This chapter is loaded for bears. There is tremendous truth in it.

**v. 1 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.**

“He came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain

disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.”

Now if we look at the map, basically what we would find is that they’re going backwards on the other journey. The last time they went out together, Derbe was the last spot they hit. Then they whipped around and came all the way back and came up to Antioch again to report.

So it’s like Paul’s saying, “Well if Barnabas and John Mark want to go to Cyprus on the front end of the tour, we’ll go to Derbe on the back end of it so we’re not duplicating their work and their ministry.”

So they come to Derbe, then 80 miles further from there—or 62 miles further from there is Lystra.

Remember what happened at Lystra? Lystra is the place where they healed that fella. And then after they healed him, they thought they were gods. And then the Jews finally caught up with them from Iconium and reported on them.

And as a result of that report, they stoned the apostle and drug him out of the city for dead. So he’s coming back now to Lystra.

While he’s there, he meets a young man again by the name of Timothy.

Timothy was probably impressed by Paul’s preaching and he

really longs for a father image in his life. He was basically raised by his mother, Eunice and his grandmother Lois. His father was a Greek. He was not a Christian and not interested in spiritual things.

And when he saw the apostle Paul, he found somebody he could really relate to. And it's really special that God would bring Timothy into Paul's life now since John Mark is gone.

It's like God is saying, "You know look, I take one thing out of your life if I bring something real special in."

Timothy and Paul had a fantastic relationship. Timothy of course is the recipient of two books that are written by the apostle. The last one is 2 Timothy, which is the one that he wrote when he was in prison just before he died and is a very special treasure—so is 1 Timothy.

He is "the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek."

### **v. 2 He was constantly being well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.**

"He was constantly being well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium."

It's about 20 miles north from there so it's another little town. And he's evidently had ministry in these two towns. He's well-spoken of.

**v. 3 This one Paul wanted to go forth with him. And having taken him, he circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.**

“This one Paul wanted to go forth with him. And having taken him, he circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”

Now some people read that and they say, “Paul, weren’t you at the Jerusalem Council? I mean you learned at the Jerusalem Council that circumcision isn’t necessary. And they’re not going to keep the Law. Now why are you taking this young fella, who is the product of a mixed marriage, and you’re having him circumcised?”

It’s that kind of almost malicious attitude and selfishness that creates so much havoc in witnessing to people and building bridges. How much would we really do for somebody that we really wanted to come to know Christ?

The apostle recognizes Timothy’s ministry will be limited if in fact he is not one who is put to this particular ordinance. And so therefore the Jews would have an excuse for not listening to him.

Paul is smart and he’s also extremely sensitive to people. Knowing that, he prepares Timothy for his ministry that’s going to involve some Jewish evangelism by seeing to it that

he is not hindered from carrying out that ministry.

Just because we come to know Christ doesn't mean that we can do whatever we want to. So oftentimes we take our liberty and turn it into license and we become extremely selfish and fail to become sensitive to our responsibility to others and how they're thinking.

And here Paul is not going back under the Law. He's preparing this young man whom he loves deeply for a ministry that he's going to have along with him.

**v. 4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering to them the decrees for them to be keeping which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.**

“Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering to them the decrees for them to be keeping which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.”

Remember when they finished the Council, they got the minutes of the meeting and formed a decree? And basically the decree had four parts. “Y'all are no longer going to be troubled, you are welcomed as brethren but we would like to ask you as a courtesy to please do these four things”:

1. don't eat meat that's been offered to idols,

2. restrain from fornication,
3. don't eat that which is strangled, and
4. stay away from blood.

And then basically the letter said:

Acts 15:29

if you keep yourselves free from such things as these, you do well. Farewell.

Now that's the letter that they're bringing. What they did in Jerusalem was they ran off several copies and carried this volume with them and delivered these decrees to these Gentile congregations, letting them know—now that they're visiting some of them again—it's salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's all that's necessary.

**v. 5 So then the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.**

“So”—what happened? —“the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.”

What's that tell us? Paul had a two-fold ministry whenever he got together with Christians:

1. he EDIFIED them.

And as a result of their edification:

2. they went out and EVANGELIZED—they touched lives.

They were “strengthened” by the edification of the Word of God and then they went out and had a ministry touching other people’s lives so they too would come to know Christ. And so they “were increasing in number daily.”

This is going to be interesting as we pass on through these verses.

**v. 6 Then they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.**

“They then passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.”

Now what is this? Basically what’s happening here is they’re heading straight west. This is about a 300 mile trip from where we have just left them here. And they’re going all this distance and every time they pass through a city, they’re thinking, “Hey, this must be where God’s leading us. This is where we need to stop and preach.”

And the text tells us they were “forbidden by the Holy Spirit.”

How sensitive have we been to the Holy Spirit today? Now really, be honest. Don't give this super spiritual look.

Are we worn out and frazzled and frittered simply because we've done a whole lot of things that the Spirit of God did not intend for us to do?

The more sensitive we are to the Spirit of God, the more effective are the strokes that are made when we learn to listen to Him.

### Isaiah 30:21

And thine ear shall hear a word behind thee saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." When you turn to the right and when you turn to the left.

### Proverbs 3:5, 6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understand; in all your ways acknowledge him, and [WHAT?] he will direct your path.

### Psalms 37:22, 23

...The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in his way.

The Spirit of God waits to guide and to direct.

All they're doing is heading west. They've left everything that's familiar.

“They passed through” the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. And every time they stop, the Spirit of God says, “Uh-uh, not here. Time to move on.”

This wasn't just for them. The Holy Spirit leads us too.

Now suppose we stop Paul and Timothy and Silas on the road and say, “Where y'all going?”

“Oh we really don't know.”

“Well what is the will of God for your life?”

“Well we really don't know right now what the will of God is for us.”

“You mean the great apostle doesn't have the will of God all mapped out for his life until the end of it!”

These people come along and tell us that God drops a blueprint out of heaven and tells us what His will is. All He wants is an obedient heart and He'll get us going on the track. And when we're sensitive to the Spirit, we're going to be where He wants us to be.

God doesn't give it all to us in big bunches. He never loaded

them up with manna in the wilderness for the whole trip. He gave them a tad bit each day and they were faithful.

And we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.”

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and [What?] take up his cross daily and follow me.” (ref. Luke 9:23)

These fellas are not really sure but they know they’re being led by the Holy Spirit. And thank God for that! At least they’re in the center of His will and are being led.

Sometimes we miss the greatest blessings in our lives simply because we’re not sensitive.

These fellas are heading west. That’s the only thing they have from the Lord and that’s the only way they can go. And so they keep going but they’re “forbidden by the Spirit to speak the word in Asia.”

Look at verse 7.

**v. 7 And when they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;**

“And when they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;”

What happened? Well they got to Mysia and they're saying, "We've only got 50 more miles of real estate before we hit the Aegean Sea. Obviously it must be God's will for us to turn north and go 200 miles up to Bithynia and open the Gospel in Bithynia."

And the Lord says, "Uh-uh. Go west young man, go west! Just stay on your track! Don't turn away now and go running off up to Bithynia. I don't want you up there!"

**v. 8 and having passed by Mysia, they came down to Troas.**

"and having passed by Mysia, they came down to Troas."

Well now God has to do something because the water's in front of them. They've been faithful and they've come all the way to Troas.

Well, sure enough:

**v. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul during the night. A certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."**

"And a vision appeared to Paul during the night. A certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"

Here comes the new instructions by means of a vision in the night. They're to go to Macedonia to open the Gospel in Europe. Thank goodness they're going.

**v. 10 And when he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to tell them the good news.**

“And when he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to tell them the good news.”

What's strange about verse 10? Change of person isn't? What happened?

The team grew from three to four. Luke joined them.

Whenever we see a “we” in the book of Acts it tells us Luke's along with them. They have their writer, their Press Secretary, with them. So it's FOUR MEN who leave Troas and who are heading on toward Macedonia.

Now they have a 120-mile trip ahead of them by boat. There is an island by the name of Samothrace that's right in the middle, about 60 miles from the land. They're heading north now.

And this island is like the island of Cyprus and they're going to stop there for the night.

**v. 11 Then having set sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;**

“Then having set sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace,”—that’s the island—“and on the day following to Neapolis;”

Now that’s the seaport, and they get off the boat in Neapolis and go 8 miles to the city of Philippi. That’s basically the journey that they’ve taken.

We have four fellas—Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke—that are making this trip.

**v. 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a [Roman] colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.**

“and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a [Roman] colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.”

Now what are they doing when they land in the city? They’re looking for the man from Macedonia. After all, wasn’t that the vision? There was a man saying, “come over and help us.”

And they’re expecting when the boat lands and they get on shore and get to the city, that God is going to bring the man from Macedonia to the door. That’s the way we think isn’t it?

God never does it the way we think. The sooner we learn that, the happier we're going to be. And once again these boys are going to learn.

Now there's no synagogue here. This is a Roman colony. So these boys can't use their regular program we saw in an earlier study where they go in and stir up a riot at the synagogue and then they have a ministry going. There's no synagogue here.

So what do they have to do? Well they decide they'd go out by the river and see if they could find somebody to pray with on the Sabbath.

**v. 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate along the river bank, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and having seated ourselves we were speaking to the women who had come together.**

“And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate along the river bank, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and having seated ourselves we were speaking to the women who had come together.”

That isn't any different than today is it? It's the women who pray! They probably wrote their own version of what happens when women pray. Here they are.

These four guys are thinking, “Lord, where is the man from Macedonia?” Sitting in a women’s prayer meeting here on a river bank on the Sabbath.

Now it isn’t all bad. But it just isn’t what we expected and so it’s different.

“I’m confused Lord. I don’t really understand what You’re trying to tell us here.”

It was Helen Steiner Rice who wrote a beautiful little poem called:

### A Prayer for Patience

God, teach me to be patient—  
Teach me to go slow—  
Teach me how to “wait on You”  
When my way I do not know...  
Teach me sweet forbearance  
When things do not go right  
So I remain unruffled  
When others grow uptight...  
Teach me how to quiet  
My racing, rising heart  
So I may hear the answer  
You are trying to impart...  
Teach me to let go, dear [Lord],  
And pray undisturbed until  
My heart is filled with inner peace

And I learn to know Your will!  
(source unknown)

And while they're talking together at the river, God is working in that group of ladies.

**v. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, one who is worshipping God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened so that she kept her mind concentrated upon the things which were spoken by Paul.**

“And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, one who is worshipping God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened so that she kept her mind concentrated upon the things which were spoken by Paul.”

Lydia was a professional lady. She's 250 miles from home. She came to Philippi for the market and decided to open her own little store—a house of fabrics.

“seller of purple fabrics,”

She's an astute business woman and her heart is being “opened” by the Spirit of God as Paul speaks.

Anyone having that experience? Is the Spirit of God opening anyone's heart to receive something as the truth as the Word

of God is spoken?

We pray for others, eagerly desirous that they might be responsive to His Word. And here the Lord is opening her heart.

The man from Macedonia happens to be a woman. She's going to be the first one on the river bank who comes to know Jesus Christ as Savior.

**v. 15 Now, when she was baptized and her household, she begged us, saying, “Since you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, having come into my house be abiding.” And she prevailed upon us.**

“Now, when she was baptized and her household,”—they too came to faith—“she begged us, saying, ‘Since you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, having come into my house be abiding.’ And she prevailed upon us.”

Titus and Timothy both tell us that one of the characteristics of a godly person is given to hospitality.

An OPEN HEART leads to an OPEN HOME.

And here Lydia says, “Where are y’all staying?” And Paul says, “Oh we’re staying at the Holiday [Inn]. That’s ok. We’ve got everything all taken care of.”

“Well now listen, let’s save the Lord’s money here. We’ve got

two bedrooms with twin beds in each and a bath and shower in between. Y'all come and stay at our house! We just won't hear no for an answer!"

Paul says, "Oh, come on. We can't do that! We don't want to impose on you. We're going to be here for quite a while!"

Well obviously she's a pretty strong-willed woman because she "prevailed" upon them. So Lydia's house became the staging area for the ministry in the city of Philippi. And so she is the start of all of this that's going to take place in this wonderful ministry here in the city. She just "prevailed" on them until they said yes.

**v. 16 And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.**

"And it happened that as we were going"—so all 4 of them are together—"to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling."

Do we believe in the existence of Satan? Do we believe in the existence of evil?

Scott Peck in his book *People of the Lie* says:

(People of the Lie by M. Scott Peck, M.D.)

In common with 99 percent of psychiatrists and the majority of clergy, I did not think the devil existed. Still, priding myself on being an open-minded scientist, I felt I had to examine the evidence that might challenge my inclination in the matter. It occurred to me that if I could see one good old-fashioned case of possession I might change my mind.

(source unknown)

And he has. He's seen a bunch of them. He is a psychiatrist who's breaking from all who are in his profession to recognize the existence of evil. He is recognizing the fact that the evil one is in fact at work in these days.

Now this girl is possessed by a demon and she is bringing great profit to her masters. She's following them out to the river bank in their prayer time.

**v. 17 This girl, following after Paul and us, was crying out saying: "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."**

"This girl, following after Paul and us, was crying out saying: "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."

Why does this happen immediately after the conversion of Lydia?

Whenever God starts to work, the evil one will always say, “I am going to rise up and oppose. I’m going to do what I can to destroy any possibility for ministry.”

We make a decision in some area of our life that we’re going to do something different in accordance with the Word of God and it’s going to be rough. We’re going to face all kinds of opposition and flack to keep us from implementing what we need to do. We’ll find all kinds of diversions and excuses.

“Now what are we going to do to cause these four men to get discouraged about it? Well we’re going to bring one of our little instruments right across their path and get them upset.”

**v. 18 And she kept on doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and having turned around he said to the spirit, “I am commanding you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out at that very time (instantly).**

“And she kept on doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and having turned around he said to the spirit, ‘I am commanding you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’ And it came out at that very instant.”

There was DELIVERANCE!

He breaks the power of canceled sin,  
He sets the prisoner free;  
(source unknown)

There's a lot of controversy going on among believers about satanic oppression and possession. Peck addresses that. He says:

(People of the Lie by M. Scott Peck, M.D.)

There is a good deal of controversy over these matters of “oppression” and deliverance. Many charismatics practice deliverance in cases in which I would find no evidence of demonic involvement. Indeed, they will attempt to cast out things as “spirit of alcoholism,” “spirit of depression,” or “spirit of revenge.” They report many instances of dramatic success. Yet some of us wonder how long-lasting such “cures” are, how many failed cases go unreported, and whether these almost casual and generally untrained interventions may not frequently be actually [more harmful than good]. There is no way of knowing until the work of deliverance practitioners can be scientifically evaluated. For the present I still must pay some heed to one of my mentors who believes that “oppression” is a false category—that there is either possession or not and that there is either an exorcism or not. In his words, “The charismatics generally are not dealing with true demons, but occasionally they catch a real fish.”  
(source unknown)

There's so much confusion on that but don't let that confusion cause a belief in the fact that Satan doesn't exist, because he does. And he's eager to destroy and to hurt and to damage.

**v. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone out, having seized Paul and Silas, they dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities.**

“But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone out, having seized Paul and Silas, they dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities.”

Describing Satan’s involvement in our world, Donald Grey Barnhouse had one of the best illustrations. He drew up a little parable that he taught his children to show how Satan works, and yet how Jesus gets the victory. And this is the parable that he told:

(That Man Barnhouse by Margaret N. Barnhouse)

This was a parable of a man who owned a great estate, and who had an enemy who hated him.

The Enemy tried and tried to think of a way to get at the Estate Owner. The Estate Owner had a grove of beautiful trees on a knoll in the middle of the estate. He loved those trees, and often came to sit under their shade. “I know!” cried the Enemy, “I’ll cut down one of his trees!”

So in the dark of the moon, with axe and wedges, he crept to the grove. Furiously he worked all night, spurred on by his hate. Just as dawn was breaking, he heard hoof beats in the distance and saw the Estate Owner and another man riding toward the grove. The Enemy, driven on by his fury, worked even faster. As the Estate Owner approached, the Enemy

knocked out the wedges and the great tree tottered and fell. Twisting as it did so, it pierced the Enemy with one of its branches, pinning him to the ground. The Enemy shook his fist in the Estate Owner's face, screaming, "Curse you! I may be dying, but I've cut down one of your trees! I've cut down one of your trees!"

The Estate Owner spoke, gesturing toward his companion, "This is my architect. I plan to build a great house in this grove. In order to do this it was necessary to cut down one tree. And that's the one you've been working on all night." (source unknown)

And that's a picture of what happens. "You think you're going to stop these fellas from getting the Gospel to Macedonia? You ain't stopping them."

God is going to get the victory here before this thing is over. Watch it unfold. It gets great!

**v. 20 And when they brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are causing a great deal of trouble in our city, being Jews,**

"And when they brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are causing a great deal of trouble in our city, being Jews,"

**v. 21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to be accepting or to be doing, being Romans."**

“and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to be accepting or to be doing, being Romans.”

**v. 22 And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates having torn off their robes, were issuing orders to be beating them with rods.**

“And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates having torn off their robes, were issuing orders to be beating them with rods.”

Now what is the difference between a Roman beating with rods and the scourging that they speak about by the Jews?

Well the scourging by the Jews is a long leather whip. The man stood up over them, made a gaping wound on the back. And the long tentacles of it came all the way around and just brought gashes clear down on the front so they were a complete mass of wound when they were through, front and back.

This is the use of hickory rods—a real thick rods. They do damage—terrible damage to the back. Lacerate it, in fact, to the point where blood flows freely. And so they’re being beaten with rods according to the Roman custom.

**v. 23 And having inflicted many blows up on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to be guarding them securely;**

“And having inflicted many blows up on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to be guarding them securely;”

John Pollock in the book *The Man Who Shook the World* by John Pollock describes the pain of going through something like this. He’s the one who wrote *The Life of the Apostle Paul*, and that’s a good one to read. And here is a man who experienced it and this is what he says about the feelings:

(The Man Who Shook the World by John Pollock)

...the first dozen strokes are like jagged wire, tearing furrows in the flesh, and the second dozen [strokes are] like the filling of the furrows with molten lead, sensations of intense and intolerable pain.

The synagogue elder in charge could stop the punishment if the prisoner collapsed or lost control of his bowels, but such mercy can have been exercised seldom, for the [man who perpetrating the act was] indemnified if [in fact] the victim died.

(source unknown)

So it was a horrible, horrible thing.

Now before we go any further, what are these fellas thinking?

“We came to Macedonia in Your will. We haven’t found the man from Macedonia yet. We’ve met a couple of women and

we've gotten whipped with rods. Lord, I'm really wondering if that Mexican restaurant in Troas caused me to have a wild dream that night instead of a real vision of your will."

Incredible questions! It just doesn't seem right!

Juanita Ryan wrote a book called *Standing By*. People don't need us to give them a lot of words when they're hurting. Just stand by. The book has this prayer:

(Standing By by Juanita R. Ryan)

God!

Our hearts long for you.

We have tasted of your goodness.  
We have experienced your love.  
We have trusted you.

Now we are confused.  
We feel ignored, crushed, abandoned.

Are you aware of our pain?  
Are you the Maker of this tragedy?  
Did you stand by while the Evil One worked?  
How can you, then, be called Love?  
How can we trust you again?

God!

Our hearts long for you.  
But we are hurt, [we're] confused, [we're] angry.

We doubt.

Show us yourself.

We ask this in the name of Jesus  
who asked "Why?"  
"Why have you forsaken Me?"  
(source unknown)

And then it was Ruth Harms Calkin who prayed:

Just Cry

Lord, the sky is black and ominous  
And all sense of Your presence is gone.  
I am utterly devoid of energy  
I am thwarted at every turn  
My fragmented thoughts  
Refuse to form words  
All I can bring to You  
Is my anguished cry.

[Then she heard the Lord say:]  
Then cry, dear child  
Just cry.  
(source unknown)

**v. 24 who, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

“who, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.”

Now what does he do? As soon as he gets the command, he is really going to put it to them. He puts them in the darkest dungeon in the place, roughly puts their feet into the stocks and their hands. And we can imagine what that does to the back and the horrendous wounds that they've just faced.

What are they saying?

Sometimes the Bible says some things very quickly and we forget what's happened.

Like verse 25 says:

**v. 25 But about midnight Paul and Silas praying were singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;**

“But about midnight”

When did this happen? Probably fairly early in the day. Now say these guys are not human. Don't say they're plastic saints that we can't relate to. These fellas are probably sitting in

these stocks from about two in the afternoon until midnight and it's taken them ten hours to get their act together to be willing to accept this. They're just like us. They hurt!

And they have to start thinking, "God is working all things together for good to them that love Him and to those who are called according to His purpose." (ref. Romans 8:28)

"He never makes a mistake! We know the Lord's led us here and through it all He's going to get the glory. It just didn't happen. It's planned by God because with God nothing can be accidental."

And so all of those thoughts are coming through their minds. And the two of them go back and forth together. Timothy and Luke are probably headed to Lydia's house when the rumble starts so they don't get caught! And they are there praying, wondering what happened to these guys.

"Now about midnight Paul and Silas praying were singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;"

We can't praise and pray until we've submitted to what God has allowed in our life. As long as we stay stubborn and rebellious and resistant, we're not going to have a witness either. And our greatest witness is going to be when we're singing in the storm and when we're triumphant in the midst of a trial. When we're hunkered down like a jackrabbit in a hail storm and everything's coming apart, we just stay in

there and we keep singing, in expectant fashion knowing that God's going to work.

Imagine about midnight that old jailer hears:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise Him all creatures here below.  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.  
(source unknown)

They stopped singing that and they started singing:

To God be the glory,  
great things He hath done.  
[And is going to do.]  
(source unknown)

Great is Thy faithfulness!

O for a thousand tongues to sing,  
My great Redeemer's praise.  
(source unknown)

There they are singing.

“and the prisoners [are] listening”

He's giving them a song in the night.

And as they're praying, they're not praying for deliverance. They're praying for the Lord to give them grace to accept what He's allowed. Because when he writes the Philippian church later, in Philippians 4:11 he says:

“I've learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I've learned that whether I'm full or hungry, I've got a lot or I don't have anything; no matter what the circumstances are, I've learned to be content in all that.” (ref. Philippians 4:11, 12)

God couldn't stand it any longer! On the repertoire they started singing “How Great Thou Art” and God shook the place. Look at it—verse 26.

Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!  
(source unknown)

**v. 26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were caused to totter; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.**

“and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were caused to totter; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.”

That's incredible, isn't it? Prisoners are listening to all this.

**v. 27 And the jailer, having been roused out of sleep and having seen the doors of the prison opened, having drawn out his sword, was about to be killing himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.**

“And the jailer, having been roused out of sleep”— he probably fell asleep listening to them sing—“and having seen the doors of the prison opened, having drawn out his sword, was about to be killing himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.”

What’s he doing? Remember three weeks ago when Peter was delivered from prison, sixteen of those fellas bought the farm because they were executed by Herod for letting the prisoner out? He had no choice. It was either suicide or execution.

Think about the fact that they have just been whipped badly. Really bad. And they have all these wounds. And this jailer takes them from the whipping post and he takes them down, down, down in the deepest, darkest, dampest dungeon in the place. And he shoves them roughly in the stocks and they’re sitting there singing and the gates come open and the things are unfastened and they turn around and they see the jailer that’s been treating them roughly about to commit suicide. What do they say to him?

“Go ahead and do it man! Stick it to ya! You deserve it the way you treated us!”

Aren't we like that though? We just want that sweet revenge that comes when the chips finally fall our way.

**v. 28 But Paul cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!”**

“But Paul cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!’”

“Don't do it man! Don't do it!”

**v. 29 Then having asked for a light, he rushed in and having become terrified, he fell down before Paul and Silas.**

“Having asked for a light, he rushed in and having become terrified, he fell down before Paul and Silas.”

**v. 30 And after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”**

“And after he brought them out, he said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’”

If somebody came up and asked us, could we tell them?

“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Do we know? Can we tell somebody? If they have just a few minutes to live?

See somebody in an accident on the road and they're dying alongside the road, we rush to them and ask them if they're a Christian and they say no. Do we know what to tell them? Are we really prepared and ready to minister to people?

Here's a man who has an open heart. Really through all of this comes the man from Macedonia, doesn't it? There he is. Finally got a chance to see him. And they're coming right to him!

"Come over and help us now."

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

**v. 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.**

"And they said,"—love your neighbor as yourself?

"And they said,"—well are you from America? And he said no.

"Well good. Then believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're from America you don't have to because everybody's a Christian in America."

"And they said,"—go to church? Give your tithe? Do a lot of good works?

"And they said,"—well it's impossible to really know before we

get there whether we are or we aren't.

“And they said,”—really now, you're talking about something that's out of my realm.

“And they said,”—don't you know God helps those who help themselves.

“And they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, you and your household.’”

Have you? Did you? Do you want to? Are you sure? Do you know it? If you died tonight would you go because you have?

When it's all said and done, it's believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, inviting Him to come into our life.

### 1 John 5:12

He who has the Son has life, and he who has not the Son of God has not life.

The story's been told.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved,”

Colson in his book *Will Anybody Speak for God*, says this:

(Who Speaks for God by Charles Colson)

Just one personal example. In thousands of interviews in the past ten years, I have invariably described my conversion as “accepting Jesus Christ.” Reporters, equally invariably, translate those deliberate words into “religious experience” or “conversion to Christianity” or sometimes “born again,” since that term has been so secularized as to be harmless. Christianity? Fine, it preaches peace. But talk about a risen Lord, the Christ who lives today, and you’ll find yourself subtly censored.

What do you think will happen in your life in the next few years?

I have no idea what the future holds; it’s good we don’t. If I had known what was ahead a few years ago, I would have fled in terror. But I do know one thing, [and I love this] *Jesus is who He says He is*. Knowing Him is all that matters. At the risk of sounding triumphal, I wouldn’t trade the toughest day of the last few years—which includes those in prison—for the best day of the forty years before.

(source unknown)

A man saying, “I came to know Jesus Christ as Savior.”

Now salvation is not a process! It happens instantaneously. At the moment of faith Jesus Christ comes into our life.

R. V. Bingham said this:

Some people ridicule sudden conversions, but they do not know God. It does not take God any more time to save a soul than it did for him to breathe into man’s nostrils the breath of

life in the beginning. Paul presents no long process of reform to this man. He simply spoke unto him the word of the Lord and uplifted an Almighty Savior as the object of faith.  
(source unknown)

**v. 32 And they spoke to him the word of God together with all who were in his house.**

“And they spoke to him the word of God together with all who were in his house.”

Notice something here. All the supernatural phenomena are gone. There’s no speaking in tongues, there’s no big emotional dramatic thing taking place. No fireballs out of heaven, no raising from the dead. It’s quiet faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that brings about the salvation of this man as they spoke the word of God to him.

**v. 33 And having taken them that very hour of the night, he washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized and all those who belonged to him.**

“And having taken them that very hour of the night, he washed their wounds,”

That tells us a man has a hold of it when he becomes a servant. It’s always beautifully done.

“he washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized and all those who belonged to him.”

**v. 34** And having brought them up into his home, he set a table before them and rejoiced greatly with his whole household, having believed in God.

“And having brought them up into his home,”

What do we have with Lydia? Open heart, open home. At the end of the study—open heart, open home! This is 4:00 a.m. but they’re going to have scrambled eggs and bacon and sit around and rejoice over the salvation of his household!

“And having brought them into his home, he set a table before them and rejoiced greatly with his whole household, having believed in God.”

**v. 35** Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, “Release those men.”

“Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, ‘Release those men.’”

Trying to find out who caused that earthquake that was like a 6.5 on the Rector scale here.

Get these men out of town!

**v. 36** And the jailer reported these words to Paul, “The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now

**therefore, having come out, be going on your way in peace.”**

“And the jailer reported these words to Paul, ‘The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now therefore, having come out, be going on your way in peace.’”

“Please get out of town. Don’t cause any more trouble man. It’d be best for you just to leave quietly.”

But the apostle’s not like that. And there’s a reason for it.

**v. 37 But Paul was saying to them, “Having beaten us publicly without a trial, men who are Romans, they threw us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.”**

“But Paul was saying to them, ‘Having beaten us publicly without a trial, men who are Romans, they threw us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly?’”

“No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.””

“We want a royal escort!”

Now why is the apostle taking such a prideful position here? He wants to free this church from any further government intervention as it begins to flourish and the Gospel is preached. He does not want the authorities putting them

under constant surveillance after he's gone.

He wants to deal with them head-on, that they made a mistake in the way they treated him. So that when the church continues, it will not have to experience governmental oppression after these fellas are gone.

**v. 38 Then the policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.**

“Then the policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.”

**v. 39 And having come, they begged them, and when they brought them out they were asking them to go away from the city.**

“And having come, they begged them, and when they brought them out they were asking them to go away from the city.”

**v. 40 And after they went out of the prison, they went to the home of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they exhorted them and departed.**

“And after they went out of the prison, they went to the home of Lydia,”

This is where Luke and Timothy are.

“and when they saw the brethren, they exhorted them and departed.”

Alright, who are “the brethren”?

Well “the brethren” have to be some of these fellas who were listening to them sing in the prison. They came to know the Lord.

“The brethren” obviously also have to be some of the others there in Philippi who have come to know Him in the families of these others—Lydia and the family of the jailer.

All of them together now are there at the house of Lydia. He “exhorted them” and then they “departed.”

When we’re faithful to follow God’s plan, He’ll take us where we need to be and He’ll really bless us. If there’s ever a church that was dearer to the apostle Paul, it was none other than the Philippian assembly.

We have a series called “The Goal of the Christian” which is the story of the book of Philippians. It would be a wonderful thing to study the book of Philippians because it is Paul expressing, out of a heart filled with love, his concern for these Philippian saints. They were very sacrificial. They were very supportive, very helpful of his ministry.

So God enriched his life by closing all the doors until he got to

Troas to send him across and to put him into this place where he could minister to these folks in Philippi.

But the thing that even makes it more special is that the Lord gave them victory over the evil one too. And the Gospel just kept on going.

Now there are a number of lessons. Let's go over them as we wrap up.

Lesson #1: God brought Timothy into Paul's life as a very special gift.

In the Philippian letter he says of Timothy: "I don't have anybody like him who is as genuinely concerned concerning the things of you." Everybody else is concerned about their own things but not Timothy.

God brought a special gift into Paul's life when he brought Timothy to him.

Lesson #2: EDIFICATION and EVANGELISM ought to be our ministry.

When we meet brothers and sisters in the body, we edify them with the Word. When we meet those who know not the Lord, we evangelize—we share Jesus Christ with them that they might come to know Him.

Lesson #3: Prayer is a vital part of Paul's ministry.

And any ministry that's successful has prayer at its heart.

Lesson #4: The Lord opened Lydia's heart so she would respond to Him.

Lesson #5: Satan is actively involved in opposition to the teaching of the Word.

When Paul writes to the Thessalonian Christians he says, "I tried to come to you once and Satan hindered us, yay twice he hindered us as we tried to come to encourage you and build you up in the faith." (ref. 1 Thess. 2:18)

Lesson #6: Nothing could stop Paul and Silas from PRAYING and PRAISING the Lord at midnight.

Lesson #7: Have you ever asked the question, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?"

That's individual. We have to do that and respond to the message of the scripture to receive Jesus Christ by faith.

Lesson #8: Have you ever believed in the Lord Jesus and been saved?

If so, when?

Can we put it down? Do we know it? Maybe we don't know the date and the hour, but we have some kind of frame of

reference as to when that took place, when we believed in the Lord Jesus.

Lesson #9: All the supernatural phenomena are gone in this conversion.

All the supernatural phenomena are—that is externally. God does a work in his heart. But all the supernatural phenomena are gone.

Lesson #10: God has protected and provided for His children once again in these circumstances.

The Lord leads us daily, taking us along the pathway of His will as we're obedient and submissive to Him.

Nancy Leigh DeMoss shared this story in one of her books:

William Cowper, great poet that he was, had a very deep depression and was ready to commit suicide. As a result of this, he hailed a horse-drawn cab one night and he gave as his destination a bridge over the Thames River.

But fog was so thick that night that he rode about for an hour or more. Where was the river? Rebuking the cabbie for taking so long to find the river bank, Cowper thrust open the door of his cab. Upon doing so, he discovered that instead of being near the river, he was right back at his own doorstep! Smitten by the coincidence, he rushed to his room, took a quill and paper and penned the lines that have cheered millions who

have come to the brink of disaster:

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Roy O. McClain

(source unknown)

Make no mistake about it, God is at work in our life and He wants to lead and to direct us.

First a relationship—what must we do to be saved? Then daily He will make known His will to those who are submissive and obedient to Him.

Father, thank You for this joyous occasion to look into such a beautiful chapter, to have the opportunity to be fed once again by Your Spirit the Word of God. We pray now that the things we've talked about might serve to be a blessing, might exhort and encourage Your children. And if there are those who know not the Christ, that they would not leave before responding to the Lord Jesus. In the Savior's name we pray. Amen.

# A Practical Study of ACTS:

## Take It To Them!

### “Putting the GO Back in the Gospel”

#### STUDY NUMBER TWELVE – ACTS 16:1-40

#### NOTES

v. 1 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

v. 2 He was constantly being well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

v. 3 This one Paul wanted to go forth with him. And having taken him, he circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

v. 4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering to them the decrees for them to be keeping which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

v. 5 So then the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

v. 6 Then they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

v. 7 And when they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

v. 8 and having passed by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

v. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul during the night. A certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

v. 10 And when he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to tell them the good news.

v. 11 Then having set sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;

## NOTES

v. 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a [Roman] colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.

v. 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate along the river bank, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and having seated ourselves we were speaking to the women who had come together.

v. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, one who is worshipping God, was listening, whose heart the Lord opened so that she kept her mind concentrated upon the things which were spoken by Paul.

v. 15 Now, when she was baptized and her household, she begged us, saying, “Since you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, having come into my house be abiding.” And she prevailed upon us.

v. 16 And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

v. 17 This girl, following after Paul and us, was crying out saying: “These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation.”

v. 18 And she kept on doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and having turned around he said to the spirit, “I am commanding you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out at that very time (instantly).

v. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone out, having seized Paul and Silas, they dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities.

v. 20 And when they brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, “These men are causing a great deal of trouble in our city, being Jews,

v. 21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to be accepting or to be doing, being Romans.”

v. 22 And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates having torn off their robes, were issuing orders to be beating them with rods.

v. 23 And having inflicted many blows up on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to be guarding them securely;

## NOTES

v. 24 who, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

v. 25 But about midnight Paul and Silas praying were singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

v. 26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were caused to totter; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.

v. 27 And the jailer, having been roused out of sleep and having seen the doors of the prison opened, having drawn out his sword, was about to be killing himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

v. 28 But Paul cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!"

v. 29 Then having asked for a light, he rushed in and having become terrified, he fell down before Paul and Silas.

v. 30 And after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

v. 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household.

v. 32 And they spoke to him the word of God together with all who were in his house.

v. 33 And having taken them that very hour of the night, he washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized and all those who belonged to him.

v. 34 And having brought them up into his home, he set a table before them and rejoiced greatly with his whole household, having believed in God.

v. 35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."

v. 36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Now therefore, having come out, be going on your way in peace."

v. 37 But Paul was saying to them, "Having beaten us publicly without a trial, men who are Romans, they threw us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."

v. 38 Then the policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. And they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.

## NOTES

v. 39 And having come, they begged them, and when they brought them out they were asking them to go away from the city.

v. 40 And after they went out of the prison, they went to the home of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they exhorted them and departed.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Read Acts 16:1-40 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. Who does Paul find in Lystra that becomes a very close associate of his, according to verses 1-3?

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3. What was the response to their ministry, according to verse 5?

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4. What happens to Paul, according to verse 9?

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5. Who is the first convert in Macedonia, according to verse 14?

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6. What got Paul and Silas into trouble, according to verses 16-19?

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7. How did Paul and Silas respond to beating and imprisonment, according to verse 25?

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8. What happens in verses 26-31 in response to Paul and Silas's prayer and praise?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: God brought Timothy into Paul's life as a very special gift.

LESSON #2: Edification and evangelism was Paul's two-fold purpose in his ministry.

LESSON #3: Prayer is a vital part of Paul's ministry.

LESSON #4: The Lord opened Lydia's heart so she would respond to Him.

LESSON #5: Satan is actively involved in opposition to the teaching of the Word and the preaching of the Gospel.

LESSON #6: Nothing could stop Paul and Silas from praying and praising the Lord at midnight.

LESSON #7: Have you ever asked the question, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

LESSON #8: Have you ever believed in the Lord Jesus and been saved? If so, when?

LESSON #9: All the supernatural phenomena are gone in the conversion of these Philippians.

LESSON #10: God has protected and provided for His children once again in these circumstances.