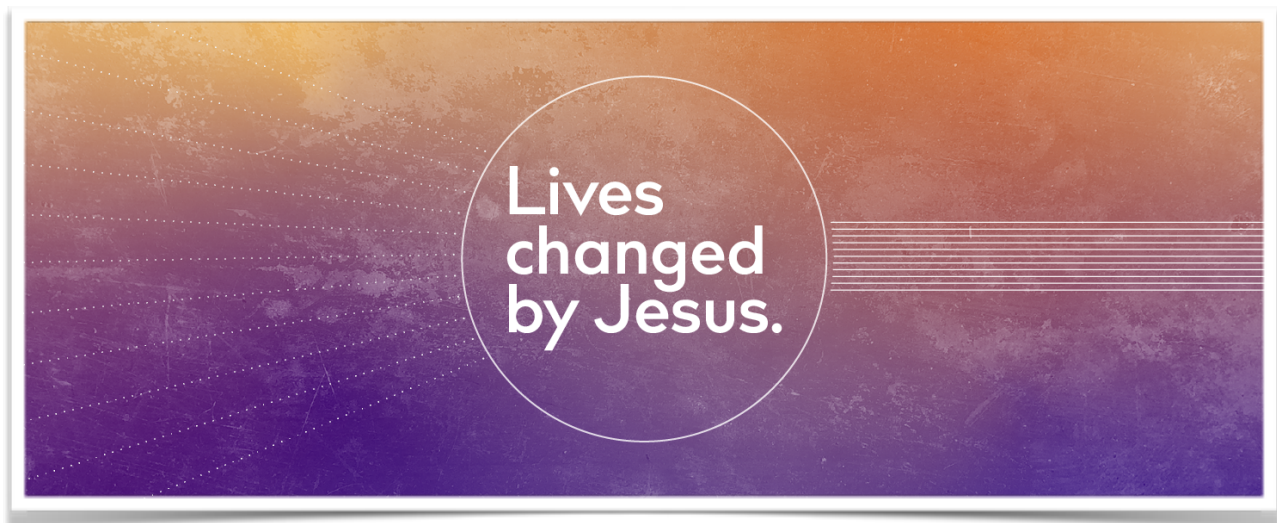


## GBC Discipleship RESOURCE



# Lives changed by Jesus.

Week One | **Lydia – A heart opened by the Lord (Acts 16:11-15)**

*For a brief overview of why (and how) to engage in each of these practices, you can read the [Guideline For Growing](#) on our website.*

<https://www.gymeabaptist.org.au/growing/pages/guideline-for-growing>

## OVERVIEW

In this series we will be exploring several New Testament characters whose lives were changed by an encounter with Jesus. Over the course of the series we will dive into the transformation they experienced, the focus of their encounter, the required response, any friends who were involved, and the invitation into mission. The importance of these five aspects will vary but will be a consistent part of the discipleship menus.

As in previous “menus” there will be a variety of activities to take up. These can be done by yourself (God and You), with a couple of friends (You and a Few), or in a Life Group (You and a Crew). As with any menu, choose what resonates with you. In other words, there is no need to do all of the menu!

Just one more reminder that you can listen to the sermon that accompanies the discipleship menu - it can be found on our website or wherever you listen to podcasts. You may also want to listen to The Big Ill podcast; a mid-week podcast that explores three big questions raised by the sermon.

## PASSAGES TO MEDITATE ON

Make Acts 16:11-15 the central reading this week. Read it aloud multiple times.

As you do, you may want to picture the scene in your mind – Paul and his companions walking outside the city down to the river, the group of women gathering to pray, the pockets of conversation, etc. – and picture where you are in the scene. Who do you associate with? How close are you to the “action”? This kind of imaginative reading is a very helpful way to read narrative texts.

You may also want to read the rest of Acts 16 which narrates Paul and Silas’ ministry in Philippi and/or Paul’s epistle to the Philippians. As you do, consider the impact of Lydia’s hospitality and patronage on the effectiveness of the mission.

## JOURNALING QUESTIONS

**In the sermon (which you can listen to again on the GBC Sermon Podcast) four indicators of a heart that is open to Jesus were suggested in Lydia’s story: interest in spiritual matters, careful investigation of truth claims, a curiosity about Scripture, and taking the mission of Jesus personally (so that our resources flow through our open heart).**

1. What other indicators would you consider as evidence of an open heart? (You may want to ‘reverse engineer’ your answer so to speak, and ask, “What are the signs of a hard heart?” See Exodus 9:33-35; Proverbs 28:14; Matthew 13:13-15; Ephesians 4:18).

2. To what degree would you say your heart is open to Jesus? Which of the four indicators is the most open? Which is the least open?
3. Apart from the miracle of Jesus opening Lydia's heart to respond to the good news (which is no small thing!), her participation in the mission of Jesus through her hospitality and patronage of Paul and his companions is the most obvious change in Lydia's life. What aspects of Jesus' mission is your heart most open to (e.g., What stirs your spirit in terms of wanting to be involved?)?

## PRAYER THEME

The state of your heart. Pray that the Lord will continue to open your heart and keep it open so that you can continually respond to his invitation to participate in his mission.

## EXAMEN

This is a "new" menu item and is related to the importance of maintaining an open heart. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, in her book *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2015, IVP) describes the practice of the examen as a way to discern "the voice and activity of God within the flow of the day" so that we can reflect on where we are most and least present to God's love during the day. (2015, 58). It includes setting aside a couple of times a day when we ask two questions of God:

- When today was my heart most open to Jesus?
- When was my heart least open?

# HOSPITALITY

This is another "new" menu item inspired by Lydia's hospitality. Calhoun defines hospitality as creating "a safe, open space where a friend or a stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another." (2015, 161). It can include sharing your home, food, resources and anything else you call your own so that others might experience God's welcoming heart.

Hospitality as a spiritual practice seeks to love people rather than impress them, living out the reality that all we have is God's, and displaying God's welcome in the world.

To practice it you may want to:

- Remember a time you have been welcomed and received and reflect on where Jesus was in that event.
- Praying for people who will be, or who have been, in your home.
- Treating every person who comes to your door (e.g., delivery men) as "an angel in disguise" (Hebrews 13:2).