

The Conversion of a "Working" Mom

Acts 16:9-40

On this Mother's Day we will look a "working" Mom who got saved named Lydia. She was the first convert in Europe—If you are of European descent, you owe a lot to Lydia! A very pretty name. But, how many women do you know named Lydia?

➡ Three significant conversions in Acts 16:

1. Lydia by the **riverside** (vs. 13-15)
2. The soothsayer by the **roadside** (vs. 16-18)
3. The jailers family by the **fireside** (vs. 23-34)

Everything we know about Lydia is found in three verses (vs. 14, 15, 40). I don't remember ever hearing an entire sermon preached on Lydia. But God gives us a snapshot of how this "working" mom got saved.

It started with...

I. An open door for PREACHING the Gospel (vs. 6-12).

➡ The events that directed Paul to preach the Gospel at Philippi were orchestrated by God. God opens doors for the Gospel!

A. The PROHIBITING of Paul (vs. 6-8).

➡ Psalm 37:23—"*The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.*" Or, in Paul's case, the *stops* of a good man are ordered by the Lord also.

- The will of God is not always revealed in positives, but sometimes in negatives. Closed doors as well as opened doors may reveal God's will.
- Did God stop Paul and Silas from going into Asia because there was no unsaved people there? No. God stopped Paul because there were some women praying in Macedonia asking God for help.

B. The PLEA for help (vs. 9-10). How many unsaved people are praying for help, but we are not surrendered to go to them?

- It is not the responsibility of the lost to come to us. It's our responsibility to go to them with the Gospel.

- C. The Pondering of the vision (v. 10— “...*assuredly GATHERING*”).
- After considering all the factors involved (the closed doors... the circumstances... the call for help), they concluded it was God’s will to go to Macedonia. It was not a decision based on emotion, but on the evidence of God’s leading hand.
- D. The PROMPTNESS to go (vs. 10-12). Once you know what God’s will is—DO IT!

II. **An open heart is PREPARED for salvation** (vs. 13-14).

- After their arrival, they find a prayer meeting. This was typical of a modern prayer meeting today—Only women attended. Among these women was a professional woman in the textile industry named Lydia.
 - Lydia was from Thyatira, a city renowned for its purple dye. This was same area God forbid Paul to go to (v. 6). God was answering Lydia’s prayer for help. She was not in Thyatira. She moved to Philippi. So God lead Paul to Philippi to win Lydia to Christ.
- A. Her INDUSTRY—**She enjoyed a successful career.** Lydia was a seller of purple.
1. Today, we don’t think anything about buying something purple. But in Roman days purple was only worn by the wealthy because it was so expensive. Purple dye came from a Murex shellfish. It took hundreds of these mashed shellfish to dye just a few yards of cloth. Most of Lydia’s customers were probably powerful and wealthy.
 2. She was also apparently “well-to-do.” She had a house large enough to lodge Paul and the members of his team (4 of them). It would also serve as the initial meeting place of the church of Philippi (v. 40).
 3. There are some who believe a woman’s place is limited to the confines of her own home. Yet, I cannot find a single verse in the Bible that prohibits a woman from having a career outside the home. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 was a mother who had a successful career outside her home.

My dear wife has worked several secular jobs outside our home —In a donut shop; McDonalds; High School office; administrative assistant in an insurance office; a bank teller, etc. Barb did what she felt was needed to help supplement the financial needs of our family during the early years of our ministry. Nobody is going to convince me that Barb was disobedient to God in working these jobs.

B. Her INTERESTS—**She engaged in spiritual concerns.**

➡ As good as Lydia's business savvy was, it was her interest in spiritual things is most important. She didn't know Christ as her Savior, but she understood there was something missing in her life.

The Macedonian call for help reminds us that the best the world has to offer never satisfies. The people of Greece had culture—their philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle)... their champions (Alexander the Great)... their athletic games (the Olympics started there)... their architecture with great theaters, stadiums and buildings. And they had religion—Athens was full of thousands of gods. But they did not have Jesus Christ. Hence, they needed help.

The same is true of America. We seem to have everything. We have education, money, luxuries, high tech gadgets, and sports with great stadiums, etc. But our country is in sad shape. America needs what Macedonia needed—the Gospel.

1. Her **priorities** were right—She did not allow her successful career to take precedence over spiritual matters. Often moms get so busy juggling between their careers and their families, that God is left out.
2. Her **pursuit** was right—Lydia was following the light she had —She prayed and worshipped although she was unsaved. Like Cornelius.

- Because she was following the light she had, God opened her heart to receive more light. She paid attention to Paul's preaching the Gospel and was saved!
- We should pray constantly for God to open the hearts of those who need to hear the Gospel. J. Hudson Taylor said he could not move the Chinese people so he prayed and asked God to move them. And God did!

C. Her INFLUENCE—**She exhibited saving characteristics.**

1. Obedience in baptism (v. 15).
2. Example to household — Her family followed her example.
3. Lydia illustrates how one person getting saved could open the possibility for the establishment of a local church (cf. Phil. 1:5).
 - In Revelation 2 God addresses a letter to the church at Thyatira. Paul never went there. It is highly possible that Lydia's salvation could have led to a church being established in her hometown?

III. An open house is PROVIDED for hospitality (v. 15).

- ➡ As God opened Lydia's heart to God's word, she opened her home to God's servants! If God has saved you, you should be open to serve His people with your resources.
- A. Lydia's PROPOSAL—I love the way Lydia talks to Paul—straight-forward—*"If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord [if you believe my faith in Christ is genuine], come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."*
 - B. Lydia's PERSUASION—Apparently Paul turned down her first offer of hospitality. But, *"she constrained us."*
 - The same gifts that made her a successful business woman persuaded Paul to accept her offer of hospitality. She used the gifts God gave her in her business to be used in His business.
 - C. Lydia's POLICY—From that point on, Lydia had an "open house" policy for Paul and fellow Christians (v. 40).

- Paul’s ministry at Philippi began with a small group of women. But by the time they leave, “*brethren*” were also part of this new church.
- Lydia passed on her faith—To her household, and to others in Philippi. Lydia used the same gifts that helped her build a prosper career to begin the build the Church of Jesus.

SUMMATION: We need some “Lydias” today. It’s not easy to be a working Mom. All the pressures—To be a good wife... to take care of house work... to raise a family... to care for aging parents... and to be successful at a job.

Above all that—To be a saved and serving Jesus Christ while ministering to the needs of the God’s people—Its only possible by the grace of God!

➡ Lydia’s life teaches us the importance of...

1. ...making prayer meetings a priority.
2. ...being attentive to the preaching of the Word of God with an open heart.
3. ...the following the Lord in baptism.
4. ...using your gifts and your home to further of the Gospel.