

# GROUP DISCUSSION

Questions for facilitating dynamic discussion

## Tremors

### Week 1: God Guides

#### Acts 16:6-12

Week of May 24, 2020

(Jeff Griffin, Senior Pastor)

Making the journey across the Aegean Sea from Asia to Greece was not Paul's idea. It was God's idea. So how did God convince Paul to do it? Acts 16 reveals several ways God used to guide Paul to where He wanted him to go—ways we too can look for, as we seek to follow God's lead.

**Kicking it off:** Can you relate to Jeff's story about the difference having a guide can make? Can you share a personal story about a time you got lost? What was that like?

#### Discussion:

1. *Acts 16:6* says, "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia."

Can you think of a time when you felt that the Holy Spirit himself was prompting you to do something (or not do something)? What happened?

2. *Acts 16:7* says, "When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to."

If we really believed that God sometimes guides us by closing doors, how would it change the way we react when our plans fall through? Have you ever gotten all worked up about a closed door only to realize in hindsight that God was directing you to something better? Tell us that story.

3. *Acts 16:9* says, "During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'"

Have you ever felt that God was speaking to you through a dream? If so, why do you think that?

4. *Acts 16:10* says, "After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

What are some good reasons to rely on the input of trusted friends when discerning God's guidance? Have you ever wished you would have paid more attention to the counsel of others before making a decision? If so, what happened?

5. *Acts 16:11-12* says, "From Troas we put out to sea and sailed ... to Neapolis. From there we traveled to Philippi."

It was a journey chosen for Paul by the will of God. What, if anything, gives you confidence that you're on the road of God's will for your life? How is He guiding you lately, and how are you responding?

**Wrapping It Up:** Pray for ears to hear the guidance of God. Commit together to follow even the subtlest promptings He provides.

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**Week 2: God Stirs**

**Acts 16:13-15**

**Week of May 31, 2020**

**(Jeff Griffin, Senior Pastor)**

God helps us to hear and understand what He has revealed to us in the Bible. When we seek Him, He opens our hearts to drink in these truths and respond to them. It's another one of the "tremors" God uses to show us His presence and power. He did this in Lydia's life, and He can do it in ours.

**Kicking it off:** How would you feel if you showed up to a concert and settled in to your seat only to discover that from where you sat you couldn't see or hear what was happening on stage? What would you do?

### Discussion:

1. *Acts 16:13-14* says, "On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."

God stirred in Lydia's heart such that she both understood and was moved by the word of God. If you can, tell us about a time—whether it was at your conversion or some other time—when you got a burst of insight or felt a rising passion in response to hearing or reading the word of God. What did you do in response?

2. *Acts 16:15* goes on to say that, "When [Lydia] and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. 'If you consider me a believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my house.' And she persuaded us."

Lydia was changed and she wanted to celebrate! She professed her faith through baptism right there at the river and she insisted that Paul and his companions come to her home. If you've been baptized as a believer in Christ, why did you decide to do that? What do you remember about that experience?

3. What clues does our passage (*Acts 16:13-15*) provide about Lydia's willingness to hear the word of God even before Paul arrived on the scene? What evidence could someone point to in your life that you're open and responsive to experiencing more of God's truth in your life?
4. Can you think of a "Lydia" in your life who is seeking God? What are you willing to do to help that person find God?

**Wrapping It Up:** Pray together for hearts that seek God daily. Ask Him to bless you with greater understanding of and obedience to His revealed will in the Bible.

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### Week 3: God Fights

#### Acts 16:16-18

Week of June 14, 2020

(Jeff Griffin, Senior Pastor)

We have a very real enemy, and he's coming. Satan and his demons are intent on wreaking havoc in our lives. We can't afford to be caught off guard or to try to fight this enemy on our own. The good news is that God is more powerful than Satan and will fight for us when we call on Him. It's another one of the subtle activities—a "tremor"—that He uses to reveal His power and presence.

**Kicking it off:** Can you recall a scene from a popular movie in which "the good guys" were caught off guard by "the bad guys." What happened? Recount that scene for us.

#### Discussion:

1. Philippi was steeped in demon worship, so it's not surprising that in *Acts 16:16* Paul and his companions reported that, "Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit [a demon] by which she predicted the future."

Can you think of a time when you were particularly aware that you were in the presence of—or even under attack by—an evil spirit? What happened?

2. *Acts 16:17* goes on to say that "She [the demonized woman] followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.'"

Are you familiar with other instances where Satan has "masqueraded as an angel of light" (*2 Cor. 11:14*)? What comes to mind?

3. *Acts 16:18* continues, "She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her."

Why do you think Paul became so annoyed with what was happening here?

Paul *discerned* this evil spirit and *turned* to Christ for help. What would it look like for you to put into practice Paul's two-fold strategy for dealing with an enemy attack? Can you describe for us a personalized example of what that might look like in your life?

4. Jeff shared his personal experience about being attacked by self-deprecating thoughts while preaching and finding victory by turning to God for help in prayer. Does this give you hope that you too can experience victory over your inward spiritual struggles? Why or why not?

**Wrapping It Up:** Pray for discernment to recognize the enemy's attacks and for the humility to turn immediately to God for His help. Ask Him to fight for you.

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**Week 4: God Strengthens**  
**Acts 16:19-25**

**Week of June 21, 2020**  
**(Jeff Griffin, Senior Pastor)**

Sometimes the trials and hardships of life can threaten to crush us. God doesn't promise to insulate us from pain, but He does promise to strengthen us so we can bear up under the weight of suffering. If we're listening, we just might detect a "tremor" from God that so reveals His power and goodness that we'll find ourselves singing with Paul and Silas in our darkest night.

**Kicking it off:** Tell about a time when you tried to lift or carry something but couldn't? What happened?

### Discussion:

1. Last week we read about a slave woman possessed by a demon, by which she predicted the future. She made a lot of money for her masters by fortune-telling, which stopped when Paul exorcised the demon from her. *Acts 16:19* says, "When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities."

Paul and Silas ended up being stripped, brutally beaten with rods, and fastened with stocks in the inner cell of the local jail. What do you suppose might have been the hardest part of this ordeal for Paul and Silas? (See *Acts 16:20-24*.) What aspect of their suffering can you relate to most?

2. *Acts 16:25* surprises us with what happened next: "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God."

Paul and Silas responded to two truths that turned their dungeon into a cathedral. They responded to the presence of God and the beauty of God. Which of these tends to come more naturally to you in dark times? Why is that?

3. What is it about God's presence or His beauty that makes your soul want to sing?
4. Jeff shared about his grandma in her 90s, who has committed twenty-six Bible verses to memory, which she recites when she can't sleep at night. Do you ever read or recite the Scriptures as a way of replacing discouragement with the joy of the Lord? If so, what's one of your favorites?
5. What trial or hardship is weighing you down right now? How does this passage address that situation? Is God revealing His presence and power to you in some subtle way? If so, what's He saying to you?

**Wrapping It Up:** Pray that God would strengthen you to bear up under the weight of life's hardships. Ask Him to fill you with the joy of His presence and mesmerize you with his goodness.

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**Week 5: God Uses  
Acts 16:26-34**

**Week of June 28, 2020  
(Jeff Griffin, Senior Pastor)**

God wants to use us to make a mark for all eternity by helping others find eternal life in Christ. When we're willing to set aside our preoccupation with self, God gives us subtle promptings that, if we're responsive to them, can change someone's life forever.

**Kicking it off:** Can you think of a time when you had an opportunity to tell someone about Jesus but missed it? What happened?

### Discussion:

1. Paul and Silas were chained in a Philippian jail singing God's praises at midnight when, in *Acts 16:26-27*, we read, "Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped."

If you were Paul or Silas, what do you think you would do at this point? Why do you think that?

2. *Acts 16:28-30* continues, "But Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!' The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"

Now what would you do if you were Paul or Silas? Would this development change your mind? Why or why not?

3. In answer to the jailer's salvation question, Paul and Silas replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (v. 31). "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized" (vv. 32-33). The jailer, it says, "was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household" (v. 34).

How might this story have ended differently if Paul and Silas had disregarded God's prompting to stay for the jailer's sake, choosing instead to slip away into the night as free men?

4. In the video, Jeff said, "Those who are others-centered will find that God uses them greatly." In what ways, if any, have you seen this play out in your own life?

**Wrapping It Up:** Pray together that God would make you sensitive and responsive to His promptings to point others to Jesus and the eternal life He offers. Ask Him to give you an opportunity to do that real soon.

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**Week 6: God Emboldens**  
**Acts 16:35-40**

**Week of July 5, 2020**  
**(Jeff Griffin, Senior Pastor)**

Paul and Silas had been publicly beaten and jailed for their Christian faith. Later realizing that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, the magistrates ordered their release. That's when the Holy Spirit of God emboldened these missionaries to make some bold moves for the sake of the church of Jesus Christ.

**Kicking it off:** What's one of the most courageous things you've ever done?

### Discussion:

1. *Acts 16:35-37* says, "When it was daylight, the magistrates sent their officers to the jailer with the order: 'Release those men.' The jailer told Paul, 'The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.' But Paul said to the officers: 'They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.'"

Can you envision yourself taking such a bold stand as Paul did here? Why or why not?

2. Paul explains where such boldness comes from when, in *2 Timothy 1:7*, he writes, "The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."

When have you ever experienced God's power making you bolder than you would be on your own?

3. *Acts 16:38-39* continues the story of Paul and Silas refusing to leave the jail unless escorted out by the magistrates. It says, "The officers reported this to the magistrates. And when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison."

Jeff explained that Paul and Silas wanted to protect and promote the church's reputation. With God's help, what bold step could you take to **promote the church**?

4. *Acts 16:39-40* continues, "The magistrates requested them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them. Then they left."

God had called Paul and Silas to establish the church in Philippi. Now, despite all that Paul and Silas had been through, God was giving them the boldness to **stay the course**. Where in your life do you need God's boldness to stay the course?

5. *Acts 16:40* says that Paul and Silas took time to **inspire the believers** there in Philippi. Jeff noted that bold people inspire boldness in others. How have you seen this play out?

**Wrapping It Up:** Pray together that God would embolden you to do His work.