



WEEKLY STUDY

How to Deal - Week Five

In this week's study of Acts, we meet the 2nd and 3rd characters on this leg of the journey. We had already met Lydia, a seller of purple cloth, and now it's a young slave girl and a jailer. Such interesting characters Luke chooses to tell us about when clearly many others were coming to faith as well. They stand out for a multitude of reasons, but the impact of the Gospel seems to be the same. Entire households were baptized! Maybe you will witness a big response to Jesus in your life and sphere of influence this week. I pray so.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for those who are finding a deep faith in Jesus while they serve their time in prison.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 16.16-18 (NIV)

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.¹⁷ She 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."¹⁸ 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.

- Evil is persistent. A Providence member recently asked why it always seems that every good thing seems to be accompanied by evil. We live in a broken world. That's the short (but less than satisfying) answer. Until Jesus returns and sets everything right, we will see signs of evil. In this passage, it's not the girl that was evil, it was the spirit that was inhabiting her. Paul knew it was the spirit in her that recognized the good news (something Jesus experienced too) and so he commanded that it come out of her. Otherwise, the evil spirit would have just kept annoying them, and eventually (as we've all experienced) it would become normal, background noise to their lives. They wouldn't see it anymore. When has evil become so persistent that you didn't notice it anymore?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (Ephesians 6.11)**
- *God, I never want to lose sight of what is wrong with this world. I want to see all of the good and move towards your will, while also calling out evil. Help me to remain focused on you. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 16.19-24 (NIV)

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.²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice."

²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods.²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.²⁴ When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

- Following Jesus is going to hurt. The slave owners were only concerned with their financial health. They didn't seem concerned about the message being shared by Paul and Silas, only the impact it was having on their prosperity. When faced with this financial loss, they responded with violence against Paul and Silas. All they were doing was following Jesus and sharing the Way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and they were beaten and imprisoned. What consequences have you faced when sharing the Gospel? Can you imagine that you might be willing to go to prison just for sharing Jesus with others?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. (Matthew 16.24-25)**
- *God, following Jesus is good. In him I have my hope for eternal life, and the strength to live today. But following Jesus is also dangerous—I realize that. Make me bold and wise as I share about the hope I have in him. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 16.25 (NIV)

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

- Praising in prison. These guys were in shackles! They had been unjustly detained, and thrown into an uncomfortable prison. There was no reason to be feeling great at this moment. And yet, Paul and Silas continued to be who they were on the outside of the prison bars. They prayed and worshiped like they always did. And they were noticed. Sometimes I think about how the worship of the church is heard by the rest of the world. How does the worship of the church carry out into the world through you?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5.16-18)**
- *God, I thank you for your faithfulness in times of trials. I hope that I will react the way Paul and Silas did. Give me the faith to praise you in the prisons of this world. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 16.26-29 (NIV)

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.²⁷ 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.²⁸ But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

²⁹ *The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.*

- There is power found in praises in the prison. Have you ever noticed how figurative and literal earthquakes can lead to salvation? Our lives get turned upside down in ways we would never choose, but God can bring us closer to Him in those times. God can use terrible things that He did not cause to bring about salvation. What are some of the earthquake moments in your life?

- **Prayer Prompt: For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (2 Chronicles 20.12)**
- *God, I don't always know why terrible things happen in this world, but I am committed to keeping my eyes on you. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 16.30-33 (NIV)

He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ *They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.*

- What must I do to be saved? That's a question that serves as a first step for many would-be followers of Jesus. It only comes after a moment of desperation—a realization that we can not save ourselves. In order to be saved, you have to be utterly dependent on Jesus Christ. Put your trust in him. Believe in him, and you will be saved. I love that the jailer washed their wounds. He was on his way to salvation, and he stopped to care for God's messengers! Has there been a moment in your life when you were desperate enough to ask, What must I do to be saved?

- **Prayer Prompt: Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. (John 1.12-13)**
- *God, I see what you are doing, and I have heard the message of the gospel. Renew in me the passion for salvation and the life that comes along with it. Amen.*

SATURDAY: JOHN 4.49-53 (NIV)

The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

⁵⁰ *“Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”*

The man took Jesus at his word and departed.⁵¹ While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living.⁵² When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.”

⁵³ *Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.*

- There are multiple accounts in the Scripture of entire households entering into salvation. Whole families had the course of their lives changed in a moment of surrender. We’ve seen this happen at Providence Church too. A young person asks to be baptized, and in the course of the conversation, parents, grandparents or siblings are also saved. Reflect on the sense in which salvation is both deeply personal and inherently community-based.

- **Prayer Prompt: Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” (John 13.7)**
- *God, you are working in ways that are far bigger than our plans and methods. I stand amazed at your ability to move in entire families, households, and communities. Come, move and multiply your saving work in my time! Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

- What is your experience of baptism?
- What do you believe happens in baptism?
- If baptized, how often do you think about your baptism?