

FOCUS GROUPS

Introduction To Philippians – Acts 16

Thoughts and considerations...

The letter to the Philippians is a letter of tremendous encouragement and joy. The apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sends this letter to thank the church in Philippi for their support as well as to instruct them concerning unity and fellowship.

To better **understand** the work God has done, **READ Acts 16:11-40.**

Acts 16:11-12 ~ When you are given specific geographic places in the Bible it is helpful to look them up on a map and familiarize yourselves with the area identified. Check and see if your Bible has a map of Paul's journey to Philippi.

16:13-15 ~ Lydia becomes the first recorded convert to Christ in Europe. God hears her prayers, opens her heart, and she responds. She shows her sincerity by inviting Paul and his friends to stay with them. We are not told how long the "women's prayer" group had been meeting at the river. One thing is clear though; God answered their prayers. Patience and Perseverance must be intertwined as we pray for God's work in our lives.

Open discussion:

16:16-24 ~ Although what the slave girl said was true, who she *was* interfered with *what* she said. God desires to set us free so that we can speak personally of His Good News! In doing what was right Paul draws criticism and is beaten. Doing what is right often carries a price! Discuss how this can be felt in regards to; workplace, relationships, finances, morality, ethics, etc...

Thoughts:

V25 ~ People are observing our actions in how we handle adversity. Is our God 'real' or just 'convenient'? Paul and Silas were not trying to impress people by their singing. Their singing was because of the impression Jesus left on them. What do we 'sing' when we are in adversity?

APPLICATION: Describe a time when God carried you through adversity or trial:

Acts 16:26-40

16:26-34 ~ Paul and Silas had no idea of what would take place as they prayed and worshipped. When the doors were opened and the prison keeper was awakened, the keeper wanted to commit suicide fearing that he would be thrown in prison, because prisoners had escaped on his watch. (Philippi was a Roman ruled city, a model city for Roman government. If a Roman soldier allowed a prisoner to escape then that prisoners' sentence was placed upon the soldier. It was believed it was better to die quickly at the hand of a sword than to suffer the torture of fellow Roman guards.) Rather than harboring hatred to the one who had hurt them, Paul and Silas offered hope!

35-40 ~ Paul shows a little 'spunk' as he addresses the illegal treatment he received. Knowing his rights, and motivated to help the believers that were there, Paul shows courage, respect and wisdom as he exercises his rights as a Roman citizen. (**Acts 22:22-29**)

What are some scenarios where our "rights" as American citizens can be exercised to help believers here and abroad?

V40 ~ They visited the new believers and then traveled on to the next city in their journey. It is important to note that *encouragement* was of vital importance to Paul (**Acts 14:22,15:36-41**). Paul often sought to strengthen through 'encouragement' and the letter to the Philippians is a model of that.

For next week, read the entire letter to the Philippians and be ready to discuss chapter 1.

Application for this week:

My Memory Verse: _____

My spiritual discipline to work on this week is:

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ..."

PHILIPPIANS 1:6