

Women of the New Testament – Lesson 10: Lydia

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Did we learn our lesson? Study Questions from Lesson 9 (Priscilla)

1. According to Acts 18:1-2, where does Paul meet Priscilla?

Answer: In the city of Corinth.

2. According to Acts 18:2, why is Priscilla in that city?

Answer: Forced to leave Rome (Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome).

3. According to Acts 18:2, who is Priscilla's husband?

Answer: Aquila.

4. According to Romans 16:3-4, how does Paul describe Priscilla and Aquila?

Answer: Helpers in Christ, risked themselves for Paul, and use their own home as a church.

5. Complete the following scripture:

Galatians 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

True / False

True Believers should study the word of God (2 TIM 2:15 – Study to show thyself approved)

False Priscilla was a farm worker (ROM 16:13 - Tentmaker)

True Priscilla and Aquila travelled with Paul (ACTS 18:19 – Came to Ephesus)

False Apollos corrected Priscilla and Aquila (ACTS 18:26 – Expounded on him [Apollos])

Extra Credit - In your opinion, are you a good partner, and why or why not?

Lesson 10: Lydia

'Like a stone thrown into a pond, a good deed can create ripples that extend beyond the initial splash'
– Jeanne Phillips: American advice columnist (Dear Abby - From 2000)

We do not live in a vacuum; Our actions result in a cause-and-effect event where the initial act initiates a chain reaction (good or bad). It is often very easy to see the negative wave of consequences as 'bad' choices are made. These frequently develop a momentum which appears to perpetuate, and even amplify the adverse effects of the initial action. Bad gets worse. This is no accident or coincidence:

- **1 Peter 5:8** Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.

Satan will gladly take every opportunity you provide to bring humanity down as his goal is to prove to God humanity is unworthy of heaven (**REV 12:10** – The accuser). Satan will use your disobedience to influence others to drive humanity away from God.

Although not as well advertised, the positive actions are much more powerful and lasting (**LUKE 15:7** – Joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth) good will always defeat evil:

- **1 John 5:4** For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Regardless of the strategy Satan employs against humanity, God's will is accomplished (**ISA 55:11** – Word shall not return void).

Much like the ripples in a pond, the act of bringing the Lord Jesus Christ to others has a ripple effect that eventually fills the pond - The more activity, the more ripples, as they almost appear to blend together.

In this lesson, Lydia's experience is brought forward – Her testimony causing ripples two thousand years later!

Who is Lydia

Acts 16:13-14 – Equally yoked

(13) And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*.

(14) And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

The Apostle Paul encounters Lydia in Philippi near the river, as she was in prayer.

Lydia was an influential merchant from Thyatira, a town in the Roman Province of Lydia (coincidence) in Asia Minor (modern Turkey – Now known as Ak-Hissar). Lydia's home is important because it reveals a great deal about her background. Some facts of Thyatira:

- One of the wealthiest and influential cities outside of Rome as it was the center for several of the trade guilds, such as the coppersmiths and dyers, which were responsible for much of the town's success. Situated on the Lycus river, it was not on the major trade route of Greece or Rome, and never became a large city. However, its wares made the town a prestigious and exclusive region.
- As a Roman Province, the people were mostly polytheistic (recognizing many gods in the Greek and Roman traditions), but also included a large Jewish population.

Successful Businesswoman

As a seller of purple, Lydia was most likely of the dyer's guild, as she would have difficulty competing with the organized craftsmen if independent. This means she is accomplished and connected (no regard for gender). An indicator of her affluence is the reference of travelling to conduct business, and is comfortable in trade, signifying she has the means to support herself in a very competitive environment to earn a lucrative living.

Note: Purple dye was at this time a very expensive commodity, as it was only obtained from shellfish or the madder root. The dye had the unique property similar to permanent ink, as it would not easily wash out or fade, making it a representative color of royalty (implying an unfading sovereignty).

Unshakable Faith

Raised in the polytheistic environment of Thyatira, Lydia was most likely a Gentile who was exposed to a world of gods that seemed to have no bearing. She probably came to the knowledge of God through the local Jewish population, observing their faith and learning of the nature and expectations of God, and determined the one true God was real, which meant she had to align her behavior with God:

John 6:38 – The Lord establishes the example

(38) *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

Jesus defines what it means to observe lordship – One must be obedient to Christ to claim Him as Lord.

A true testimony of faith which Paul would witness, as he was led by the Holy Spirit to this appointment (**ACTS 16:9** – A vision) on his way to Macedonia, to find Lydia in prayer beside the river with the other women of faith.

Despite the world of confusion around her, Lydia did not accept the collage of gods, but was committed to God, as she is described as a woman 'which worshipped God'.

The problem – Her understanding of God is limited by restrictions embedded in the law, and there was no concept of God's grace, which kept her heart open for more: The Lord opened her heart - Holy Spirit had prepared her for the truth! As Paul witnessed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Lydia hung on his every word!

Spiritually Awakened

Acts 16:15 – A new creature is born

(13) And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.

Upon hearing Paul bring the truth of Christ, Lydia accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and begins life anew:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Lydia's new life immediately results in several actions:

- **Submitting** to the believer's baptism and walking in newness of life
Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- **Witnessing** to her household and ready to testify through her faith
1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.
- **Obedient** in service
- **John 15:10** *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

Lydia may be a part of a much bigger picture as the town of Thyatira later became an important center of Christian faith, and cited by the Lord as one of the seven churches of prophecy:

- **Revelation 2:18-20 – The praise of purpose and curse of compromise**
(18) *And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;*
(19) *I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*
(20) *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

The Lord recognizes their accomplishments (good ripples), but rebukes their compromising attitude (acceptance of idolatry) which has a negative affect (bad ripples) on their spiritual health (**REV 2:21-23**).

Lydia's testimony is one of strength, dignity and success, but tempered with unrelenting faith in God, to come to trust in the provision of the Christ in Jesus, trusting in eternity. Her example brings the Lord's words to life as she is an example of a 'rich' receiving eternal life (and it all starts with a heart for God):

Matthew 19:24 and 26

(24) *And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

(26) But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, *With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.*

Next Lesson: Lois and Eunice

Women of the New Testament – Lesson 9: Priscilla

Study Questions

1. According to Acts 16:14, how did Lydia earn a living?

2. According to Acts 16:14, where is Lydia from?

3. According to Acts 16:14, who opened Lydia's heart?

4. According to Acts 16:15, what was Lydia's first act after hearing the gospel?

5. Complete the following scripture:

John 13:15 For I have given you an _____, that ye should do as I have done to you.

True / False

Reference

T F Satan seeks to promote (defend) humanity

T F Jesus put God's will first

T F Believers should always be ready to testify

T F Thyatira became a thriving Christian community

EXTRA CREDIT – In your opinion, are you ready to give an answer for your joy?
