

Lydia, a Seller of Purple

Key Verse:
*"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."
—Acts 16:14*

Selected Scripture:
Acts 16:11-15,40

Today's lesson relates to

the introduction of the Gospel to Europe. Following Paul's first missionary journey, he had become acquainted with Silas. Paul determined the time was right to take a second missionary journey through Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, and Lystra, with Silas joining him. In these places they strengthened the faith of those who had already accepted the Lord through the Apostle's first missionary journey.—Acts 15:40,41; 16:1,4

After good success in the mission up to this point, Paul intended to travel north and east through Asia Minor. However, circumstances worked against this plan until the apostle concluded that the Lord was preventing these efforts. In a dream Paul saw a man dressed like a Macedonian, calling to him and saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Accepting this as divine leading, Paul promptly began the journey that brought him into Europe. (Acts 16:6-10) Here was unmistakable evidence of God's supervision over all the interests of his Church.

Philippi, one of the chief cities of Macedonia, was the first place in the scriptural record where the good tidings were preached in Europe. Paul and his companions learned of a small religious gathering held every Sabbath by the riverside outside the city gate. It was a prayer meeting and a place of worship and fellowship. Those gathered there were predominantly, if not all, women.—vss. 12,13

Among these women was Lydia, who our Key Verse says, “worshipped God.” “A seller of purple” refers to her profession of a dye maker. Hearing Paul preach the Gospel not only opened her heart, enlightening the eyes of her understanding, but she was also prompted to obey it in full consecration. She then symbolized that consecration by water baptism, she “and her household.”—vss. 14,15

After receiving the Gospel, Lydia used her home and resources in divine service by inviting Paul and his companions to stay with her. She did not view hospitality as a burden, but as a privilege. In receiving the Lord’s servants, she honored God and strengthened the work of the Truth in that place.—vs. 15

Lydia’s hospitality teaches humility and proper spiritual courtesy. Paul and his companions did not force themselves upon her or demand support, although they had ministered spiritual things to her and her house. She, on the other hand, pressed the invitation sincerely, saying that if they judged her faithful to the Lord, they should come into her house. This shows both her earnest desire to serve and the careful spirit of Paul and those with him, who avoided imposing upon others.

Lydia’s example shows that God can use one devoted individual in a much larger divine arrangement. This reminds us that no sincere service is too small when it is done for the Lord. A prepared heart, a faithful household influence, and a hospitable spirit can all become channels of blessing. ■