

CALLED TO SUFFER

Lesson 3: Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Session Goals

As a result of conversations and activities connected with this session, group members should:

- chart Paul's first missionary journey;
- examine the journey's successes and the opposition it encountered;
- be introduced to Paul's theology of sin;
- explore how Paul organized to nurture leadership in the early church;
- continue to make connections between the life and message of Paul and their own lives and faith.

Biblical Foundation

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the regions of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit kept them from speaking the word in the province of Asia. When they approached the province of Mysia, they tried to enter the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them. Passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas instead. A vision of a man from Macedonia came to Paul during the night. He stood urging Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" Immediately after he saw the vision, we prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. —Acts 16:6-10 (CEB)

Paul and Silas began the Second Missionary Journey, taking the Gospel to Europe. In Philippi, Paul met and baptized Lydia, drove evil spirits from a slave girl, and was thrown into prison with Silas. An earthquake freed them, and they converted the jailer before leaving Philippi.

- Why did Paul decide to take the Gospel to Europe? Have you ever pushed yourself beyond your comfort zone? What happened?
- Why were Paul and Silas thrown into prison after healing the slave girl? How did they escape, and what did they do during the escape?
- Why were the magistrates afraid when they learned Paul was a Roman citizen? Why do you think Paul decided to challenge the magistrates before leaving town?
- What can we learn about suffering from the example of Paul?

The Jerusalem Council

- The results of the council were most remarkable. Why?
- What can we learn from that council about how to address conflict in the church?
- Why does the author assert that the council's decisions likely sealed the fate of Christianity as a separate religion from Judaism?

Conflict with a colleague

Conflict not only emerged in the life of the early church, it surfaced in Paul's own personal life and in his relationship with Barnabas.

- Like all of us, sometimes Paul's greatest strengths could also be his greatest weaknesses. How did Paul's perseverance play into his disagreement with Barnabas?
- What are your strengths? In what ways can they also be weaknesses?
- How did this disagreement affect Paul's second missionary journey? Who accompanied him on this journey?

Paul's Second Journey

- Who joined Paul and Silas at Derbe?
- (Read Acts 16:1-3, 1 Timothy 1:5, and 2 Timothy 3:14-16) Given the controversy over circumcision, were you surprised to read that Paul had Timothy circumcised? How do you respond to the reasons the author relates?

(Read Acts 16:6-10)

- Have you ever been prevented from going where you wanted to go and doing what you wanted to do? What were the circumstances, how did you feel, and what were your reactions?
- Was there an occasion when you experienced disappointment, only to have new and amazing opportunities open up for you? Looking back, how do you interpret this experience?
- Have you ever had a vision of your own Macedonia man? If so, to what did you sense you were being called? What did you do?

(Read Acts 16:10) Note that for the first time, Luke's account uses the word *we* to describe Paul and his traveling companions.

- What does the word *we* suggest about who might have joined the missionary journey?

(Read Acts 16:11-15 and Acts 16:17-40)

- Who were the individuals described as being converted?
- Was there anything surprising or unusual about the situation or the people involved?
- What were the circumstances of the baptisms?
- Are there any theological issues raised?
- The author points out times when Paul treated women with dignity and other times when Paul seemed to relegate women to a subordinate role. What explanation does the author give for this apparent contradiction? How do you respond?
- When Paul released the young woman in Acts 16 from her demon, she was then unable to make money for her owners. Often an encounter with the power of Christ will come at some economic cost. Have you ever experienced this? What happened?
- Paul and Silas experienced suffering while in prison in Philippi. How did they respond? What do you make of the fact that Paul did not make known his Roman citizenship until he was released? When have you endured suffering? Do you agree with the author that our faith changes how we face suffering?
- Reflect on what you think it means to speak the “word of God.” How do you share your faith?