



North Christian Church

www.nccdighton.org

Self-Guided Study

Topic

The Book of Acts – Chapters 16-18

Background

- See previous Self-Guided Study outlines for additional details
- Paul's "Second Missionary Journey": AD 49-52 (Acts 15:39-18:22) (see available diagrams)

Critical Thinking Questions (pre-reading)

- Why were missionaries typically sent out in twos, at least, and sometimes even more? (cp Ecc 4:12)
- How critical was the presence of encouragement in the early church? Who needed to be encouraged, and how? Was playing "second fiddle" a less honorable post?
- Who were consistently the main antagonists to the spreading of the Gospel? (cp Acts 14:2, 16:3, 17:5,13)
- How involved was money, and the loss of it, in creating attacks against Paul and his companions?
- How significant is it that Paul's second missionary journey took 2700+ miles and 3+ years to complete? Can we sometimes forget about such context? If so, what are the negative repercussions?
- How did Paul choose his companions? How careful was he to not put stumbling blocks before the Jews?
- How did Paul decide where to travel, and where not? What/Who did God use to guide him, and even shut him down?
- How strong might the convictions of those leading the early church have been? How boldly did they preach? What was their consistent point of focus in debates?

Reading Outline

- Read chapters 16-18 in the Book of Acts
- Read more deliberately, but never stalling, than you would if you were reading the whole book for big-picture
- Don't lose sight of the overall purpose of the book, the "big-picture" themes, and any sweeping concepts
- Have FUN while reading and do not get frustrated...EVER!
- ALWAYS keep the Gospel reality at the forefront of your mind (eg: remember God's ultimate purpose for authoring the Bible – to reveal His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ)

Post-Reading Questions/Conclusions

- 15:36,40-41 - What do you think the impetus was for Paul's second missionary journey? What multiple purposes might there be for missionary journeys like this? How about today?
- 16:1-2 - Why do you think Paul might have been drawn to Timothy as a traveling companion? Was there evidence/fruit revealing to Paul that Timothy was ready for this, even at his young age?
- 16:3 - If circumcision no longer mattered as Christians, why do you think Paul circumcised Timothy?? Do you think this was a compromise of biblical truth, now that Christ has set them free from the Law? Why might Paul have been so concerned about the Jews?
- 16:4-5 - What do you think about the church's response to the guidelines passed on to them by the apostles and elders? Why do you think the growth of the churches is mentioned in connection with this?

- 16:6-10 - How would you describe the involvement of the Holy Spirit in directing Paul's travels? Whose Spirit was this anyway? How did God speak to them? In what ways does He speak to us/convict us today?
- Do you think the entire Trinity was involved in directing this missionary trip? Why?
- Do you find anything interesting in the order of events? (God is not a God of confusion, 1Co 14:33)
- 16:13 - How might this passage reveal our need to be flexible, especially when people are involved? How should we react if we don't get what we want/need, even spiritually?
- 16:14-15 - How might you describe Lydia's faith, before and after her encounter with Paul's message? Does this remind you of anyone else in the book of Acts? (Act 10:1-2, 43-44)
- Who do you think the true Evangelist is here?
- And how is the heart involved in saving faith?
- 16:16-18 - What kind of 'spirit' do you think was in this female slave? If this was an evil spirit, why might she have been announcing the truth about Paul and the Gospel?
- Why do you think Paul interrupted her supportive message?
- 16:19 - How often do you think people make life-changing decisions because of money? Even justifying what's wrong as right?
- 16:20-21 - How might the love of money affect one's nobility?
- 16:22 - What can we see here about human nature? Should we ever be surprised at the sinful nature in man? (Joh 2:23-25)

- 16:25 - What wisdom might we gain from Paul and Silas' faith? Ever 'wonder' at another's faith? How might their faith have affected others in their periphery?
- 16:26 - Do you think this miracle was at all associated with the active faith of Paul and Silas? (Mat 21:21) How often does God wait for us to step out in faith, before redeeming us?
- 16:29-30 - Who is the Author of crisis evangelism? How effective is it, and how might we as messengers of Christ look out for it?
- 16:31 - Even though faith is the way of salvation, do you think this the only way to give the Gospel? What ways/messages might lead people to saving faith in Christ? (Acts 2,3,7,10,17)
- 16:32-34 - What evidence/fruit do you see that the jailer truly surrendered to Christ for eternal life? Do you think the fruit of saving faith needs to be visible to others?
- 16:37 - Why do you think Paul insisted on the magistrates escorting them out of town? Why didn't he just accept this as unfair treatment for the Gospel, and move on?
- 17:1 - Do you think it was strange to find a Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica, a city in Greece?
- 17:2 - Why might Paul have started in the synagogue, when there were plenty of other people to evangelize?

- 17:4 - What can we say about the stages of conversion here? How long might it take someone to come to Christ, in humility? Should we assume people are 'saved' because they acknowledge God?
- 17:5 - What do you think the fruit is of self-preservation and religion? Does it look anything like the good fruit we can produce as believers? What is the motivation of the Jews here?
- 17:6 - Do we see possible affects here from Paul's first missionary trip? Might other believers have been living in the Great Commission?
- 17:7-9 - Do you think Jason is suffering by association with Christ here? Did Jason really do anything "wrong"? How might we be prepared to suffer, simply for association with Christ and His people? (cp 14:22)
- 17:11 - What makes for "noble character", according to this verse? Do you think God holds each of us accountable for what we believe, in the end?
- 17:12 - Here we see Jews and Gentiles believing Paul's message. Do you think it was customary for God-fearing Gentiles to be in attendance at Jewish synagogues? Why do you think "prominent" Greek women are mentioned again here? (cp vs. 4)
- 17:13 - What do you think is motivating the Jews here?! Why might they be traveling from city to city to cause dissension, rather than tending to their own synagogue in Thessalonica?
- Might you describe this as the fruit of religion? Are we as Christians called to interrupt the belief systems of others? If so, how?

- 17:14-15 - Why do you think Paul was so urgently moved at times, when his companions were not? (cp vs. 10) And yet, they left Paul in Athens alone?
- 17:16- What might we say about Paul's heart here? Why might he have been so "distressed"?
- 17:18- How many times do we see Paul including Jesus' resurrection in his message? (cp 17:3, 13:26-39) Why?
- When we share the Gospel, should we remember THAT is the proof and validation of Jesus as the God-man, not just a prophet or good teacher? Are you ready to be laughed at and scoffed by others when you include this?
- 17:21 - Do you think we should be wary of those who just want to increase their knowledge? Why do you think Paul preached to them, regardless?
- 17:22 - Do you think Paul was being complementary so that he could gain a hearing, even though he knew their religion was of false gods? How might we apply that when approaching others with the Gospel, without compromising Truth?
- 17:24-26 - Why do you think Paul started his Gospel message with God as the Creator? Why not just cut to the chase and preach Jesus and His resurrection? (remember our series on the Creator and Redeemer?) (cp Act 20:21)
- 17:28 - Why do you think Paul quoted the Greek poets? What possible benefit is this to his message?
- 17:30 - Why does Paul mention repentance, and judgment, before giving the good news? Do you think this is part of the Gospel Proper, the fullness of the Gospel? If so, how might we include this in our own witnessing?

- 17:34 - Do you find it interesting some "believed" without being given the command to believe, or have faith?
- 18:1-4 - What do you get out of Paul's relationship with Aquila and Priscilla? Why might Paul have been drawn to them?
- Why do you think scripture tells us about Paul's tent-making, and his working with them? Why do you think he only preached in the synagogue on the Sabbaths in Corinth, at least at first? (cp vs. 5)
- 18:6 - What might we say about the timing of Paul's "protest" against the Jews? (cp. Act 13:45-46, 19:9) When do you think is the right time to persist with people, and when is the right time to move on and "shake out your clothes"? (cp. Mat 10:14, Act 13:51) When might we be casting our pearls before swine? (Mat 7:6)
- 18:8 - How encouraging is it that, in spite of rejection by many, the synagogue leader and many other Corinthians believed in the Lord and were baptized? What lesson might we learn from this?
- 18:9 - Here's yet another way the Lord encouraged and guided Paul. What might we take from this? Can you share any unique ways the Lord "spoke" to you, to direct you, or confirm a decision?
- 18:14-16 - How ironic is it that a Gentile leader rescued Paul from his own people, the Jews? Is this similar to how Pilate tried to rescue Jesus from his own people? (cp. Luk 23:13-24)
- Would you rather be at the mercy of unbelievers, or religious people?

- 18:18 - Why do you think Paul took a vow and shaved his head? Isn't he under grace now, and no longer under the Law? (see NIV notes about Nazarite vow)
- If we say he was wrong to do this, would we be speculating? What does the passage say?
- 18:20- Why do you think Paul left the Jews at Ephesus, when they were receptive to his reasoning, and asked him to stay??
- 18:24-26 - What might we say about the humility of both Apollos, and Priscilla and Aquila, when they showed Apollos, a learned preacher, the way of God "more adequately"?
- 18:27-28 - In what ways do you think Apollos filled in the gap, as a "great help". What types of encouragement did he offer to those who had believed?