

December 8th, 2024

Acts 16 - The Unique Church (Sermon Transcript)

Turn with me to Acts chapter 16. Acts chapter 16. The kids seem very excited about kid life this morning, don't they? I love it. Last week, if you were here or if you missed it, I hope you listened to the podcast. Something very unexpected happened at the beginning of The last sermon, I did not preach, Pastor Ben preached, and Pastor Ben used a football illustration to open up his sermon, which I think, I knew it was coming, but then to watch you guys sit and listen to this, trying to take in what was happening, is unexpected.

I figure it is fitting for today, for me to begin with an illustration about Broadway.

I figure we'll even it out, all right? Now, I am not much into Broadway, at, at all. I get my Broadway sources from Pastor Ben, all right? And I had to ask him how to pronounce some of these names that I'm about to share with you, okay? When you look, think of Broadway, you think of all these unique, incredible shows, like The Lion King, or Hamilton, which I watched on Disney and I actually enjoyed that one, okay.

Or you think of Les Miserables. How'd I do? Okay, good. All right, because that was the dicey one right there, okay. I've typed that out phonetically in my notes to make sure I got that right. You think of just big cast and lots of characters and lots of movement and dancing and lights and all these shows are just mesmerizing.

All three of which turned into or are based on a feature film, or they put the movie together with for Les Miserables and they It's spectacular. Everybody, most people, a lot of people love it. Now, that's Broadway. There is a section called Off Broadway, where these are smaller shows, lesser known, not particularly heard of.

And there's one show on Broadway that actually has piqued my interest, and if it ever came to Jacksonville, I might watch. It is a one man show about Winston Churchill. Now you think of the Lion King or Hamilton and these big cast of characters and you have the main characters singing and dancing while you have the, whatever they call the cast in the behind them doing all the choreography.

And then you have these shows where it's just one guy playing one character for two hours. You're like that's not very unique, but it's unique in itself because it's just one character doing this one thing. When we think of Broadway, we think of those



big unique shows where everybody has a different part and you can watch just the different pieces coming together to tell this one unique story.

We don't often think about the one man show because maybe that story just isn't quite interesting to us. When we think of the local church, I want us to think and see its incredible uniqueness. That while there's this big story being played out, I want us There's a whole bunch of different characters throughout that have their own story that's a part of a bigger story.

The local church is made up of a bunch of different stories all connected to the one story of the gospel. That when we look at our lives within a local church, unique perspectives, unique backgrounds, different skill sets, different parts in the church, different stories. My story is different than your story.

But there's one story that it's all connected to. And it's the story that Jesus died and rose again and has redeemed a people for himself. When we define the church, it includes two critical components. One is the universal church. I put these definitions, they should be on the TV screen. The universal church is a heavenly assembly of everyone.

Past, present, and future, who belong to Christ. We were talking about this in our life group this past week. About when Jesus comes riding back on a horse, and we're, fighting alongside of him. And I just think at those times, we often think of just this, and it's fine, it's a small perspective that we'll be, Maybe alongside our small group behind Jesus, but then in my mind I just love the picture of this the great Bigness of the church where you're staying there behind Jesus and you got someone next to you and you're like, where are you from?

And you're like they're from China from the 1400s because Jesus saved them and I just think if this is the universal Church Brothers and sisters in Christ past present and future who belong to Christ, but then we have the local church. This is us You This is Grace Life. These are other sister churches around.

It's a group of believers in a local context identified by regularly gathering together in Jesus name through preaching the gospel and celebrating the ordinances. Because we belong to Jesus, we belong to a family that includes brothers and sisters in Christ in all places. There is a brother in Christ in Ethiopia who has the same spiritual blessings that we have in Jesus Christ.

There is a sister somewhere in Russia or China or on the other side of the United States that we will never meet on this side of heaven, that has the same spiritual



blessings in Jesus that we have. And there's also brothers and sisters in this room who because of Jesus we share the same spiritual blessings

We are a unique church. Every church should be unique. But because of the uniqueness that we see, where different people, different backgrounds, different skill sets, different personalities, there's also this common thread that we are united in Jesus Christ. Church is made up of so many different people with different backgrounds, personalities, and skill sets.

And God uses every individual in the church to strengthen the church and to proclaim the gospel to all people. For more information, visit www.fema.org So as we read in Acts chapter 16, we're going to read the whole text. The next week we're looking at Acts 17 through 28. We will not be reading all of the text next week, just heads up, okay?

But today we'll read all of Acts chapter 16, or the most part of it, most of it. And we're going to see three unique people and how God used them to strengthen the church and bring sinners to repentance. So let's read Acts chapter 16, beginning in verse 1.

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer. But his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places.

For they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them, for observance, the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So passing by Myja, they went up to Troas, and a vision appeared to Paul in the night.

A man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us. When Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. So setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neopolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedonia in a Roman colony.



We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia. From the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods who was a worshiper of God, the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

And after she was baptized, and her husband, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. And she prevailed upon us. And we were going to the place of prayer. We were met by a slave girl, who had a spirit of divination, and brought her owners much gained by fortune telling.

She followed Paul and us, crying out, These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation. And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the Spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her, and it came out that very hour.

But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. When they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, these men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.

The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. When they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do not harm yourself, for we are all here. And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? The End And they said, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.



And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. This is the word of the Lord. Father open our eyes to behold the wonderful truths from your word. We don't say it nearly enough, but thank you for the gift of the local church. May we be encouraged by what you are doing in and through one another as we seek to strengthen one another and to proclaim the gospel to the people around us.

All for your glory and your glory alone. And to your name we pray, Amen. The events of Acts chapter 16 take place immediately after Acts 15. And at the end of Acts chapter 15, you remember Paul and Barnabas had a harsh disagreement, and they split, and they went separate ways. Paul selected a friend of his named Silas.

Paul and Silas went off on what would become Paul's second missionary journey. The book of Acts records three missionary journeys that Paul went on. In this missionary journey, Paul has the same mission, to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. Along the way, they pick up a young man named Timothy. The end.

Who eventually becomes Paul's apprentice, and becomes a pastor in Ephesus, and eventually Paul writes two letters later in, at the end of his life, to young Timothy, which is 1st and 2nd Timothy. They journey to Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had forbidden them to go to Asia. Now, this is interesting language that we see in the first part of this story.

They are wanting to go somewhere, but they don't because the Holy Spirit says, no, you're not going this way. I want you to go in this direction. I want you to go to Galatia here. And so they do. As the journey continues, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. Now, this is, I think, just an incredible part of the story that we could just skip over here.

That Paul and Silas and Timothy, they're wanting to go this way, but the Holy Spirit says, No, I want you going over here to Galatia. I'm doing a work over here. They want to go to this place, but the Holy, the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So as Paul is sleeping, he sees a man from Macedonia, urging him to come to Macedonia and to help us.

And Luke, who's writing this, says we knew that from this, exactly where God wanted us to go. And so they immediately head to Galatia. to Macedonia, a providence of the Roman Empire.

When we look at this portion of this story, as God's just shifting directions for Paul and Silas on this missionary journey. That Jesus crafts his church using ordinary, Holy Spirit empowered men and women who are willing to go where God sends



them. Jesus builds his church with ordinary, Holy Spirit empowered men and women who are willing to go where God sends them.

Paul and Silas are not saying God, we wanted to go, we want to go to Galatia. They've got, there's a great opportunity there. They've also got great food, and it's, they've got great things to see there, too. But God says through Spirit, no, I'm doing a work over here. I want you to go where I send you.

And so Paul and Silas we see throughout their ministry, and throughout the book of Acts, ordinary men and women that are empowered by the Holy Spirit, willing to go where God sends them. Jesus has a mission. Amen. He invites us to be a part of it. Eventually we see that he wants to see and desires to start a church in Macedonia.

There are people there who are tender to the gospel. It's a field ripe and ready for harvest. God is already at work in the hearts of the people where Paul and Silas will eventually meet. I can't read this passage and not think about what Jesus says in Matthew 16 to, 16, 18 to Peter. He says, I tell you, Jesus is speaking, I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Throughout Acts, we have seen Jesus is going to build His church where He wants to build it.

He looks at Peter in this moment and says, I'm going to use you, Peter, to do great things. You are an ordinary fisherman. You're not educated. But you've got everything you need. The Holy Spirit's going to empower you. I'm going to be with you. I'm going to send you out with my authority. I'm going to use you.

You have a part in my work, Jesus says. But I'm going to build the church on my work. And because of that, Jesus says, nothing can stop the church. Jesus says my work, the finished work of his death and resurrection is what's going to, the church is going to be founded on. And nothing can stop this. And I believe that Paul, Silas, and Timothy understood this.

That if the Holy Spirit is redirecting them, then God is at work doing something. They want to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. So let's be clear here. As a church, the Holy Spirit does not respond to our work. The Holy Spirit is not just around just saying, Man, look what they're doing.

They're doing some great things. You know what? I'm going to involve myself now. I'm going to be at work now. No, I believe we respond to the Holy Spirit's work. So



often we want to be the driving force in all of it. And the Holy Spirit, we just say, alright Holy Spirit, we want you to be a part of this now.

Should it not be the other way around for the local church? The Holy Spirit, this is the work you're doing. We want to be a part of this. This is where you're working. This is what you're doing. We want to follow you and lead you. So if the Holy Spirit leads our church, where should we go? Where the Holy Spirit leads us.

Is it always going to be easy? No. Is it always going to be what we want it to be? No, but is it going to be good? Yes, because we know the Holy Spirit goes where the Holy Spirit goes. And if we are going to follow the Holy Spirit, we can trust that He is going to do a work and He's already working in a way that we can't even see yet.

Because a church not following in line with the Holy Spirit is a church that is off track. Throughout the book of Acts, and we talked about this at the beginning of this series. that the early church did not rely on anything else except the Holy Spirit power. That even Paul, one of the most educated and incredible Christian missionaries, is going to say, I'm taking a back seat to the work of the Holy Spirit here.

They rely on the Holy Spirit. And they understand that if we don't follow the Holy Spirit, then we're off track. Last week when we were up in Blue Ridge, Georgia we hiked a couple of trails. And if you've ever gone hiking in the mountains, you'll notice these signs posted periodically, usually at the beginning of a trail, somewhere in the middle of the trail, it's posted frequently.

And it says, stay on the trail. Now why do they do this? Because there are people out there that have a sense of adventure and think they will just walk off the trail and still get to their destination. And what ends up happening, they have to call in local authority because this person didn't follow the sign and stay on the trail and now they're in danger.

This is the story. Just stay on the trail. If you stay on the trail, you will get to where you want to go. And what happens is people think I can maybe take a shortcut through here. Then they end up and they don't know where they're at. And they create TV shows about this for our entertainments, don't they?

As a church, the Lord in his word has said, this is the trail that you are to follow. Stay on the trail. If you follow me, if you follow my leading, if you trust in my work, follow this and it will lead you to exactly where I want you to go. But too often we just say, you know what, let's try this over here.



We want this destination, but let's just step off and go over here and this is not how it works. We must be very careful to stay in step with the Holy Spirit and how He leads us. David Livingstone Missionary to Africa once said, without Christ, not one step. With Him, anywhere. This should be the motto of our lives.

Without Christ, I'm not no thank you. If Christ wants me to go there, okay, I'll go anywhere Lord, because you're with me. Jesus is building His church, but how does He do it? We see it in Acts chapter 16. Jesus built his church with his power. There are three different people, three different stories, three different backgrounds, and three different approaches to how they hear and believe in Jesus.

But there's only one gospel. It was not three different gospels, it was one gospel that changed their lives. Because Jesus built his church with his power. Let's look at these people for a little bit. The first one we see is a woman named Lydia. Here's what we know from the context and from other portions of scripture.

She is an Asian woman from Thyatira, which is also one of the churches in Revelation. If you remember from last year, I don't know when we went through that series. She was a wealthy businesswoman, a seller of fine clothing. If she lived today, she would probably have an influencer account. Just selling all sorts of purple goods.

And she's also religious. She is at a women's Bible study at the synagogue on the Sabbath day. She is a fearer of God, meaning that she believes in the one true God. But from this story she has not quite heard what God has done through Jesus. So Paul and Silas show up to this women's Bible study on the Sabbath at the synagogue.

And began explaining to them the incredible truths of Jesus, the fulfiller of all things in the Old Testament. And in this moment, it says the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And she hears of Jesus and she believes. And she invites Paul and Silas to her household. She shares the gospel with her household.

Then we're introduced to another girl. Another woman. We don't know her name. But she is probably the stark contrast of who Lydia is.

She is a slave girl. She is a native Greek because she's a girl living in Macedonia, which is a, in Greece. She's poor and she's being used for entertainment. She is being pimped out by men who just are using her for money. And she's tormented by an evil spirit.



Paul and Silas are just trying to share the gospel, and this young girl, slave girl, is going around saying, these are prophets of the Lord Jesus telling you the way of salvation. And Paul becomes greatly annoyed. I love when the Bible talks about this, because it just gives freedom to us to be greatly annoyed by people who are anti the gospel, okay?

When Paul can just be like, you know what, I've had enough. I am annoyed. And we see this throughout Acts. It is righteous at times to be annoyed, okay?

Unfortunately, we are often unrighteously annoyed, and it's usually directed towards our kids, correct? Alright. It's a side note, work on that through the power of the Spirit, alright?

So Paul is annoyed by this slave girl. Now, she's saying something that is true, but the issue is that it's coming from a demonic source. She has a spirit within her. And Paul is saying no. The authority here is not the demon, the spirit that is helping her tell the future. And most likely, demons don't know the future because they're not God.

She's probably just good at characterizing people. It's like those tricks on America's Got Talent, right? And you think they can read minds and they can't. They're just good predictors of people. Now, Paul's had enough and says to the spirit that's in her. Now I can't imagine this scene, right? You imagine this Bible study going on at church?

And Paul looks through her eyes, through her, to the Spirit, and says, In the name of Jesus Christ, this is His authority, and the authority by which Jesus has, get out. In that moment, this, Demonic spirit leaves her now. This of course makes her owners mad because now they're not making any money. She's no longer about being deceptive, no longer about a demonic spirit.

She's worthless to evildoers. And so they get mad at this. They even say to the magistrates, there are people in our town, they are Jews, that are against what we believe. Think about the statement that they're making. These are evil people, and they are calling the good people evil. Because they think what they do is good.

This is the messed up, switched around, evil society that we see throughout the world even today. Where wicked people consider themselves good, And they think good followers of Jesus are what's evil. So they throw Paul and Silas into prison. They are beaten, they are shackled, and they are in prison. They order a Philippian jailer to whip them, to beat them, and to imprison them.



This Philippian jailer, he is a Roman man. He's a blue collar worker. He's got a stable job, and he's good at it. People tell him what to do, and he does it. I imagine he probably enjoys his job a little bit because I, in order to have a job like he has, you have to enjoy it because you are getting to lay the law down.

Also being a Philippian jailer in the Providence, a colony of Rome, I imagine he is a man of Caesar. In fact, I believe he probably is. There is only one Lord and his name is Caesar, is probably what he would say.

He is duty bound to the highest authority in his life. He does his job. He beats Paul and Silas, he arrests them, he shackles his feet, and he sets watch over them. And it's midnight, and these prisoners are just singing and rejoicing because they're in prison. Now, I'm not a prison guard. We have a few men in our church.

One currently serves in this capacity, one previously has. And I don't know if they've ever seen people at midnight, prisoners, the whole prison, just rejoicing and singing hymns. I would like Chris saying I don't know if he's ever heard the prison at midnight just shouting out amazing grace. So here is the setting and they're singing.

For one, Paul and Silas, they've just been beaten. They're in prison and they're just proclaiming the goodness of Jesus and the prison's listening to them. This jailer is listening to them because when there's an earthquake that shakes the foundation of the prison, he's just assuming they've ran off because why wouldn't they?

The shackles are free. They're freed. If you were in prison, and there was an earthquake, and your shackles were free, and it was chaos, every one of us are running, right? Every one of us. We're like, this is, thank you, Lord. We are free. We're out. But Paul and Silas stay, because they're trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit.

So as this Philippian jailer goes to kill himself because he's an honorable man and he's failed at his job that he thought he was really good at but now he's a failure and it is a moment of dignity for him to just, I'm going to take this punishment. Paul and Silas say whoa, hold on there, buddy.

We're still here. Don't harm yourself. We're still here. Now this Philippian jailer who knows the chaos that they've caused, who, they hey, let me, here's your two prisoners, they just cast out a demon in town, okay? Now they're praising Jesus in the midst of being beaten and they're telling this guy who had just beaten them, don't hurt yourself, we're still here.



This man in this moment sees the power of Jesus and says, sirs, what do I need to do to be saved? And Paul and Silas just say. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved and your household. Now look at the specific language that they use. In the Lord Jesus. This is a man who's likely going to be just all in on the Roman government and the authority there and he's gonna have to denounce that authority and now believe in a stronger and higher authority in Jesus.

That is the power of God at work. All three of these individuals radically changed by the power of Jesus. What can save the religious businesswoman? The power of Jesus. What can save the demonic, tormented slave girl? The power of Jesus. Who can save the blue collar jailer? Jesus. Who can save your children?

Jesus. Who can save your annoying neighbor who plays music and parties too loud? Jesus. We're gonna keep going so y'all better start getting involved here, okay? Who can save your child who is grown, who is lost and wondering? Jesus. Who can save your boss?

Jesus can save your boss. Who can save your spouse? Who can save that individual that you've been praying for years, that they will see the power of Jesus in their life? It is nothing else but Jesus that saves sinners.

Romans 1 16. Here's what Paul will say a couple times. For I am not ashamed, Of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek First Corinthians 1 18 for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing But to us who are being saved it is the power of God Few verses later first Corinthians 2 1 through 5 and when I came to you brothers did not And I when I came to you brothers did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom You For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith may not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Paul says, I didn't give you just this incredible argument and debate you into heaven, no, I Paul says, what saved you is the power of God.

This is what saves sinners. This is what has saved us. Your salvation is only possible because of the power of God in your life. How wonderful is that?

Do we really believe that Jesus is powerful enough to save the people we love the most?



Philippi. is the leading city in Macedonia. It's got everything. It has wealth. The businesswoman was there. Lydia was there. It's got entertainment is why these men owned this girls for the because they can make money on entertainment. It had stability. The blue collar worker had job security. It would have everything as a leading city, but it didn't have Jesus.

And Paul and Silas show up by the leading of the Holy Spirit and lives are changed. And here's where we get off trail as a church. We begin to turn to worldly possibilities instead of the power of God. If our church had more money, we'd be able to reach more people. Wealth does not save. Lydia is a testament to that.

And if we can entertain more people and draw them in and attract them in, then our church will be growing. Here's the thing, people can find entertainment anywhere in anything.

And if we're gonna try to compete with the world in entertainment, the church is designed to be weird and unique and different.

Philip, I had entertainment and that wasn't saving them. You know if the church, if we just. If it was just comfortable for everybody, and stable for everybody, but even those things don't save people. We have to be a church that relies on the power of the Holy Spirit to save people, and to sustain brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you've ever had to change a tire, and you get a lug nut that's just on there, you've ever had this? And you're just like this lug nut is just stuck. And I'm a prideful man and I'm not taking this in because I can't get a lug nut off. I'm going to figure this out on my own. If it takes me all day to take one lug nut off, I'm going to do it.

Cause that's seems better than being embarrassed by taking it to the mechanic and just saying, I couldn't get the lug nut off. Okay. That's where my heart is. So I know that if I can't get enough leverage on the lug nuts to take the tire off and to change the tire, got to get some leverage. And so I have a specific.

in my shed for one specific lug nut on my car that just will not come off easy. And so I put it on there and Colton, he, we've, he's helped me. We've got to push on this thing, right? And that gives enough like leverage to change the tire. Now, if I put this bar on the wrench that's on the lug nut and I just said, all right, go for it.

Is that tire going to get changed? No. Because the Bar in itself, these tools have no power in and of themselves. It still requires power. Now here's what's the interesting part of this. I'm not putting any extra power into this. It's just using the proper tool, the right tools to accomplish the mission. To change the tire.



I am still the one that changed the tire. This tool did not change the tire. Here's what I'm trying to communicate for us. If we think that we can change people's lives without the power of God, then we will never change anybody's life. But when we understand that it is the power of God working through us to see lives changed by the power of God, then we are in the right position to be used by the Lord.

So often we think, oh, we can do it. If I preach this sermon just perfectly, oh, the walls will fall down. That's never happened. If I can sing like this in my own power, if I can serve in this way, if I can just communicate the gospel perfectly, this person will be saved. It is void of the Holy Spirit.

And when Jesus powerfully saves a sinner, he then uses them to build his church. Jesus builds his church with unique people. With different personalities, skill sets, and backgrounds to strengthen the saints and to save sinners. In Acts 16:5 we see, so the churches were strengthened in the faith and they were increased in numbers daily.

In verse 40, so they went out of the prison and visit Lydia. When they had seen the brothers they encouraged them and departed. That when the church, saved by the power of God, comes together with different backgrounds and personalities and skill sets, it is for the encouragement of the church. The Gospel proclamation in the community.

I mentioned when we began this series that our study through Acts is going to be a 30,000 foot view. We're not going to be able to cover everything. This is a, we want to hit these major themes as we head into really next in February where we celebrate our 10th birthday as a church heading into our next decade of ministry.

So in Acts, we're going to meet, because we're taking this approach, we're going to miss where a bunch of different churches were started. That eventually Paul would write letters to. What we see taking place in Acts chapter 16 is the formation of one of those churches. It is the beginning of a local church being started in Philippi.

Later on, Paul would write them a letter. The book of Philippians is a letter to the church that began in Acts 16. In Philippians 4:1, Paul says, from a Roman prison, therefore my brothers, whom I love and long for, My joy and crown stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved. And Paul loves these people. He loves this church.

This church was a incredible importance to his ministry. And it all began because of what the Holy Spirit was doing at Acts chapter 16. Can you imagine for a second a scene here? It's Sunday morning and you're getting ready for church. You go and get your kids ready. This is the first time you have ever done this.



You're going to church. You're getting the kids ready. You say, hey, we're getting ready, we're going to Lydia's house. And the girls or kids are just saying, Dad what are we doing? It's Sunday morning. We're going over to Lydia's house? Why? He said do you remember my new friends Paul and Silas?

They're the ones that saved Dad's life. They came over to the house and told us about Jesus. There's a bunch of Jesus people that are getting together at Lydia's house and we're going to go spend some time with them. You imagine this Philippian jailer takes his family, his household, to Lydia's house.

And Lydia's there introducing herself, Welcome to my house, Mom, I'm Lydia. And he's I don't really belong, I just beat these people just days ago. What am I doing here? And then maybe he's walking over and there's this young girl that's handing out just some snacks and she begins to tell her story about how she was demon possessed just a few days later.

But then through the authority of Jesus, that thing was cast out and there's other people that are meeting unique stories, unique people, all there because of one incredible Jesus and the uniqueness of the church in your story. In my story, there is one common thread that weaves us and knits us together.

It is Jesus. There's three points I want us to know as we leave Acts chapter 16, and as we head into just the future of our church. One, at Grace Life Church, everyone is welcome. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, or somewhere in between. It doesn't matter if you're a man, a woman, or a child. It doesn't matter your ethnicity, your skill sets, or what you bring to the table.

We bring people to Jesus, and we encourage them to follow all that he has commanded us to do. If someone walks into our doors, we should welcome them with open arms because we do not know how the Holy Spirit is working in their lives. Do you think that little slave girl had some baggage on her when she showed up to Lydia's house?

Probably don't we all have it?

Don't we all need someone to walk us through as we seek to follow Jesus and disciple us? Someone to walk through the door with who knows what in their background and say, Hey, welcome to our home. We're glad you're here. We're going to tell you about the grace of Jesus and how He changes sinners. Maybe don't say that immediately to a first time guest in that way, but model it by loving them and introducing yourself to them.



Or bringing a friend that you know is hurting, grieving, or suffering. Just say, hey, my church, everyone is welcome. Not everybody there. Most everybody there. You know what? Everybody there, they don't have it together. And that's what makes it unique. Because this person over here has this going on. And I'm over here, I've got this going on.

We're all here because of Jesus. At Grace Life Church, everyone is welcome. At Grace Life Church, everyone can be used by the Lord. Everyone can be used by the Lord.

Your background, and I hope you hear me when I say this, not everybody knows it. I know a lot of it, just in conversations with you. I know a lot of, just what the, what has happened in your life. Your background before Christ does not determine your usefulness in Christ's kingdom.

Man, Jesus has saved all of us and invites all of us to be a part of his work. He doesn't just pick a church filled with rich business people. He partners them up with the former demonic slave girl and then brings alongside a Philippian jailer who just beat the pastors.

Only Jesus can do that. Jesus doesn't sit down and say, Oh, this is what you did before you were saved. Sorry, you are no longer useful to me. Everyone can be used by the Lord. Your story is unique to you.

Some of you have gone through death

and disease, divorce, movements, hurts and pains. It's unique to you.

Miscarriages, loss of jobs, and that's just scratching a little bit of the surface of a lot that we've gone through. Your story is unique to you. But your unique story can be impactful to someone else.

When you sit down and you introduce yourself to someone, and you hear their hurts and their pains. And you say, you know what? I have a similar story to that. Let me tell you about the hope that Jesus showed me during this.

I don't know what happens to this slave girl or the Philippian jailer,

but we see their unique stories were likely used for the advancement of God's gospel in Philippi. At Grace Life Church, there is grace for every life. Every life. Paul, when he writes in Philippians 1, to this church that started in Acts 16, I thank my God in all remembrance of you. He's writing this thinking, man, what a day that was.



When that girl was freed from that demon, and later that night after we were singing a few songs, that Philippian jailer was saved. I thank God in all my remembrance of you. Always in every prayer, Of mine for you all And every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now And I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you Back in act 16 will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ It is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart For you are all partakers with me of grace Both in my imprisonment and in my defense and the confirmation of the gospel You For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Paul loves these people and continues to extend grace to them.

Years after the events of X16, this past week I had ordered a few items and they have our church logo on them. And so they, the boxes came and they're fragile items. So we opened the boxes and there's five of these items that are broken. And I'm like, man that's annoying. I gotta deal with this, and it's not gonna be easy.

And so we took the good ones and set them aside and we grabbed the broken ones and put them together. They're in my office and Merritt comes into my office. She's looking at the broken pieces. She takes this piece and says, Dad, look at this. It says Grace on it still.

And I. The joy she had. She didn't see the broken piece. She saw the grace.

This just should be our approach with one another. The joy of seeing the grace in our, what Jesus is doing in our lives. It's so easy to look at the brokenness and just oh, they can't be useful. But there's grace for everybody on this side of the room. There's grace for everybody over here. There's grace for everybody in the middle.

There's grace for the people who are going to sit in these empty seats. There's grace for the kids back in kid life. And there's a lot of grace for the kid, the nursery workers too,

because even broken pieces like you and me can proclaim the grace of Jesus to one another. And that should be joy to us who understand if it were not the power of God,



I would still be lost in my sin. But because of the power of God, I am still a broken piece. And now I get to proclaim the grace of Jesus to all people. At Grace Life Church, there is grace for every life that we are to extend with everyone here and who will come here because only the power of Jesus can bring broken pieces like you and me together.

A unique story, a unique church, but one incredible unifying Savior.

