CAMPUS
BIBLE CHURCH

November 8, 2026
Pastor Brian Erickson

"A Winding Road"
Acts 16:1-15
Acts: The Unstoppable Gospel

Introduction: In Acts 16 we're going to notice two things…
1) We're going to start picking up the pace
2) We're going to start to see an increase in the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Back in Acts 15
- Paul and Barnabas are getting ready to set out on a second missionary trip.
- They're going to go back to the churches they founded before and encourage them.

We saw a serious dispute erupt between Paul and Barnabas…
- …and it got so bad…that they decided they couldn't work together anymore.

This morning we're looking at three ways to have an effective ministry…

1. **Remove obstacles to the gospel message** (vv.1-5)
   Acts 16:1-2 – "Paul came also to Derbe and Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, [2]and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium."

   Historian William Barkley estimates that the gap of time between Paul's first visit to Lystra and his second visit to Lystra to be about five years.

   Acts 16:3-5 – "Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. [4]Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. [5]So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily."

   Paul saw this young man Timothy, a man he had not directly discipled in the faith, but who had been led to Christ through the work Paul left behind in Lystra.

   Even though Derbe and Lystra were large villages, everybody knew everybody.

   Paul decided to have Timothy circumcised, not because it was required for salvation.
   - But because it would help them to have a more effective ministry among the Jews.

2. **Trust the Holy Spirit's guidance** (vv.6-10)
   Acts 16:6-8 – "They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; [7]and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; [8]and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas."

   How did the Holy Spirit guide them? The prophetic word? Inward speaking? Circumstances?
   - We're not told. We just know the Holy Spirit said "No."

Proverbs 3:5-6 – "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. [6]In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Now, look at His continued guidance in Acts 16:9-10 – "A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' [10]When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Luke the author of the book of Acts, apparently living in Troas, joined Paul's team.

3. **Expect the Holy Spirit to work in people's lives** (vv.11-15)
Acts 16:11-12 – "So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following…to Neapolis; [12]and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days."

A new city, a new continent, with new people, it would be overwhelming.

Acts 16:13-15 – "And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. [14]A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. [15]And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us."

Two things the Holy Spirit does…
1) The Holy Spirit guides us.
2) The Holy Spirit works to open the hearts of unbelievers

John 6:44a – "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;"

Dallas Seminary prof Howard Hendricks said, "It is more important to talk to God about men than to talk to men about God."

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION:

1. Paul had Timothy circumcised to remove unnecessary obstacles among the Jews. In what area of your life do you need to lay down a personal freedom to better serve others?
2. Timothy had a good reputation among believers before Paul chose him. Who are the mentors in your life right now? What younger believer can you encourage in the faith?
3. The Holy Spirit forbade Paul from preaching in Asia and Bithynia. How do you react when God closes a door on a plan you have made?
4. Paul and his team kept moving forward until they received the "Macedonian call". How do you practice active waiting, continuing to serve even when God is shifting His direction for you?
5. Acts 16:14 says, "the Lord opened her [Lydia's] heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." How does this take the pressure off your evangelism efforts?
6. After Lydia was baptized, she insisted on hosting Paul's missionary team. How can you practice hospitality in your home this week?

© 2026 | Campus Bible Church, Fresno, CA 93726 | www.campusbiblechurch.com