

Acts of Jesus 31 notes

Acts 16:1-12 Their little boat trip here represents the most significant event that has ever happened to western culture.

--It was the first time that the Gospel ever came to the continent of Europe.

1. Every person in Europe spoke the names of pagan gods: Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hermes, Poseidon, etc. All the gods of paganism. Within 250 years they would be speaking the name of Jesus.

2. This gospel was destined to shape the governments, the powers, the lives of Europeans for the next almost 2000 years and would be the reason for the founding of our great nation.

--They arrived in Europe with no fanfare and nobody even having a clue what was taking place.

--Claudius was the Emperor of Rome—all eyes were focused on him—he was the most significant thing going on in the opinion of the world.

--But can you name me even one thing he ever did?

--Often the most significant stuff is the most unnoticed.

--Often it's the smallest things that have the greatest impact.

1. And it is seemingly small things that characterize the beginnings of the first church in Europe which required these missionaries to be flexible in their ministry.

--If there were any ministers that you would think would be flexible, you would think it would be Paul and his entourage.

--After all they had just gotten a lesson in flexibility having been stopped by God from going into Asia and Bithynia and then getting this call to Macedonia out of the blue---they should be used to God changing things up.

They were going to need to flex even more:

1. There was no synagogue: **V. 13** -- Paul customarily went to synagogues where people who at least had respect for God and the Bible would be honored.

2. There were no men: **VV. 13b-14a** --Paul was used to finding men to put in charge.

3. There were no locals: **V. 14** -- She's from out of town—not the way to start a local ministry is it?

--Can you feel the reluctance of Paul? **V. 15.**

4. There were no stable people: **VV. 16-18** Look how reluctant he is here

--This is not the kind of people you start a church with is it?

5. Then things went south: **VV. 19-24** – Not been in town long, haven't had a wide reacceptance and now are thrown in the pokey!

6. One more lesson in flexibility: **VV. 25-33** -- A Christian concert!
--This jailer was another area of flexing = not the most upstanding and influential in the community.

--Typically, the most hardened, violent who was not at all squeamish in the face of cruelty.

--Things did not turn out the way they expected them to, but was the

gospel mission to Europe a success?

2. Isn't it funny how God seems to do ministry the wrong way sometimes?

--Can you imagine planning a mission trip like they had?

"First we'll reach a lady who's not local then get chased by a demon-possessed girl, then get thrown in jail, then have an earthquake, then see one of the cruelest people in town converted."??

--The lesson to learn here is one of flexibility...are you flexible? Paul thought he was too.

--One of the biggest problems and one of the biggest hindrances to the gospel occurs when we think we've got ministry figured out.

--Strangely enough, this usually occurs on the heels of a very successful ministry...like Paul we settle into a pattern and style and then when things change we have a hard time changing with it.

For instance, in America, our ministries are set up, typically, to reach those who are "mostly converted."

--What I mean is our typical way of doing church even the design of our churches is very similar to what they were 60, 80, 100 years ago when there was a fear of God and a respect for Scripture and when the social norms that were enforced based on fairly high morals.

--In those days, our churches reached people by the millions.

--Times changed and the fear of God and respect for the Bible began to slide and with the level of acceptable morals began to slide with them.

--But did our churches change in order to reach a changing society...mostly, NO!!

--We kept our ministries designed to reach the mostly converted while our world around us has gone to Hell.

--Now we are faced with a society that has a relatively small segment that could be considered the mostly converted and vast majority that is consumed in the worse cycle of sin our nation has ever seen.

--Today if the church does not change its focus and effectively reach out to those with addictions, to those consumed by pornography, to the molested, to the abused, to the demonized, to those who have made a train wreck out of their lives...the church will die because there is essentially no one else to reach.

--Most Baptist churches have plateaued or are declining because we've got ministry figured out.

We need to be flexible:

1. First thing that will help us do that is to realize that our tendency is to not be flexible!

2. Second thing to do is to keep our eyes open:

--God is sending people and opportunities our way and we can see and reach them if we will get rid of our preconceived ideas of who they'll be.

3. Third thing that we need to do is be fearless.

--Christianity cowers before the monsters of drug addiction, alcoholism,

sexual deviancy, etc.

--These things cower before the truth of Jesus—always have.

4. We need to put a lot less time into trying to figure out ministry and a lot more time into being available.

--There just so much planning and praying we can do before it becomes delay on our part.

--We need to go and take advantage of the opportunities God provides for us.