



May 31 – Worship in the Dark

Weekly Reading – Acts 14-18

Main Point

Challenging circumstances are opportunities for us to worship God and share the gospel with others.

Key Verse: Acts 16:25

Try to emphasize this verse throughout the lesson, building up to the Weekly Challenge to memorize the verse this week.

Acts 16:25 – About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

Main Passage: Acts 16:25-34

The Philippian Jailer Converted

[25] About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

[26] 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.

[27] When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

[28] But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

[29] And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.

[30] Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

[31] And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

[32] And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

[33] And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

[34] Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. (ESV)

Background

Acts 16 takes place during Paul's second missionary journey as he and Silas travel throughout Macedonia proclaiming the gospel. After casting a spirit out of a slave girl in Philippi, Paul and Silas are falsely accused, publicly beaten, and thrown into prison. In the Roman world, imprisonment was harsh, humiliating, and often physically painful. Prisoners were commonly placed in stocks, limiting movement and increasing discomfort. From a human perspective, Paul and Silas had every reason to despair or become bitter.

Instead, Acts 16 highlights how God works powerfully even in suffering. While imprisoned, Paul and Silas worship publicly through prayer and singing, demonstrating deep trust in God despite their circumstances. Their response becomes a testimony to the other prisoners and ultimately leads to the salvation of the Philippian jailer and his household. This passage shows that God often uses difficult circumstances not only to strengthen believers but also to create opportunities for the gospel to reach others.

Christ Connection

Paul and Silas suffered unjustly for proclaiming the gospel, pointing ultimately to Jesus, who also suffered though He was completely innocent. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus made it possible for sinners to be forgiven and set free from sin and condemnation. Just as God used the suffering of Paul and Silas to bring salvation to the jailer and his family, God used the suffering of Christ to bring salvation to the world. Because Jesus overcame sin and death, believers can worship with hope even in difficult circumstances, trusting that God is still at work.

Life Group – The Flow

- 15 minutes – Conversation and relationship-building
- 10 minutes – Year of Prayer guided prayer time
- 5 minutes – Introduction (icebreaker, activity, or illustration)
- 35 minutes – Study and apply the Bible
- 5 minutes – Application exercise
- 5 minutes – Conclusion

Year of Prayer (10 min)

Always pause and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we lift our voices in praise to You, for You alone are worthy of all glory and honor. Your mercy endures forever, and Your faithfulness is unending. We bless Your holy name. You are the Lord, My Fortress and Shield.

Fill free to lift your words of adoration at this time. (pause)

Father, we come humbly asking for You to reveal anything in our lives that displeases You—actions, attitudes, desiring to please man rather than You in the decisions we make.

As we are still in Your presence, open our hearts and minds to things for which we need to ask forgiveness. (pause)

We acknowledge that Your Son came to save those who are spiritually lost—may we exercise boldness in sharing the gospel without fear. Just as the disciples went out and shared the gospel, may we be aware of opportunities to proclaim the good news to others.

Pray for those in your life without Christ. (pause) Would you now share their names aloud.

- Friends
- Family
- Co-workers
- Others

1 Chronicles 16:34 “Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good: for His steadfast love endures forever.” 2 Corinthians 9:15 “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” the gift of salvation through Your Son Jesus Christ.

What words of thanksgiving do you have to share? (pause)

As we lift up our petitions and intercessions Father God, we pray for those who’ve been baptized recently. May they continue to grow in their faith. Make us aware of those around us who need to be encouraged and or challenged in their faith. Guide us in meeting those needs. We pray for our pastors and ministers—give them rest and a renewed commitment to the call on their lives.

Please share your petitions and intercessions at this time - have group members share Prayer Requests. (pause)

We thank you Almighty Father for hearing our prayers. Help us to always pray in faith, believing and in agreement, in the name of Jesus. Amen

Introduction (5 min)

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Most people don't realize how much hardship amplifies what's really inside of us.

When life is easy, it's fairly simple to appear patient, trusting, and faithful. But pressure has a way of acting like a microphone; it turns up whatever is already happening in our hearts.

Some people become angry. Some become fearful. Some withdraw. Some become bitter.

But occasionally, you meet someone who responds to suffering with peace, worship, and trust in God, and it stands out.

That's exactly what happens in Acts 16. Paul and Silas respond to pain and uncertainty in such a different way that the people around them cannot ignore it.

Ask:

- **Have you ever known someone whose response to hardship deeply impacted or challenged your faith? What stood out about them?**

Transition to Passage 1:

"In Acts 16, we're going to see how God used worship in the middle of suffering to become a powerful witness to others."

Study and Apply (35 min)

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says and how we can apply it in our lives this week.

Passage 1 - Acts 16:25-30

READ THE PASSAGE - Have a volunteer read Acts 16:25-30.

The Philippian Jailer Converted

[25] About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them,

[26] 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.

[27] When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

[28] But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

[29] And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas.

[30] Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

Acts 16:25

Despite being beaten and imprisoned, Paul and Silas spend the night praying and singing hymns to God. Their worship reveals deep trust in God's character and sovereignty, even in painful circumstances. The fact that the other prisoners were listening shows that faithful worship can become a powerful witness to others.

Acts 16:26

God responds with a sudden earthquake that shakes the prison and opens the doors and chains of the prisoners. This demonstrates God's power and authority over every earthly circumstance. The miracle also creates an opportunity for the gospel to impact the jailer's life.

Acts 16:27

The jailer awakens to find the prison doors open and assumes the prisoners have escaped. Under Roman law, a jailer could face severe punishment or death if prisoners escaped under his watch. In despair and fear, he prepares to take his own life.

Acts 16:28

Paul stops the jailer from harming himself by assuring him that all the prisoners are still present. Rather than using the opportunity to escape, Paul and Silas demonstrate compassion and concern for the jailer's life. Their integrity and mercy become part of their witness.

Acts 16:29

The jailer rushes into the prison trembling with fear. His response shows that he recognizes something extraordinary has happened and that God is at work. The fear he

experiences is not merely fear of punishment but a growing awareness of spiritual reality.

Acts 16:30

The jailer asks the most important question a person can ask: “What must I do to be saved?” His question reveals that the events of the night—and the witness of Paul and Silas—have deeply impacted him. God used suffering, worship, and faithful witness to prepare his heart for the gospel.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What stands out to you about the way Paul and Silas responded to their circumstances?
2. **Discuss.** How can the example of Paul and Silas change the way we respond during difficult situations?
3. **Discuss.** How do you think this experience prepared the jailer to hear and respond to the gospel?
4. **Deeper Dive.** Why can suffering and hardship sometimes create opportunities for the gospel that comfort and ease do not?
5. ★ **Reflection - write answers on an index card.** Reflective (write answers on an index card): When life becomes difficult, what usually becomes louder in your life—worship, worry, frustration, or self-pity? Why?

Transition to Passage 2:

“Even in the middle of suffering, God was already working to draw someone toward salvation. Now we’ll see how the jailer responded to the gospel and how his life was completely changed.”

Passage 2 - Acts 16:31-34

READ THE PASSAGE - Have a volunteer read Acts 16:31-34

[31] And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

[32] And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

[33] And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

[34] Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Commentary

Leader Prep: Use the following commentary to prepare ahead of time. As you lead, feel free to summarize key insights rather than reading it word-for-word.

Acts 16:31

Paul and Silas respond clearly and simply: salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. The invitation to believe is personal, requiring individual trust in the gospel. Their statement also introduces the opportunity for the jailer's household to hear and respond to the message as well.

Acts 16:32

Paul and Silas continue by explaining the word of the Lord to the jailer and his household. This shows that genuine faith is rooted in hearing and understanding the gospel message. Salvation is not automatic or inherited but comes through personal belief in Christ.

Acts 16:33

The jailer immediately begins caring for Paul and Silas by washing their wounds, demonstrating a visible change in heart and attitude. His actions reflect repentance, compassion, and humility. He and his household are then baptized as a public expression of their faith in Jesus.

Acts 16:34

The jailer brings Paul and Silas into his home and joyfully cares for them. The joy described in this verse reflects the transformation that comes through salvation and reconciliation with God. The gospel not only changed the jailer individually but impacted his entire household.

Teaching Toolbox Tip

Show the Difference Between Circumstances and Identity

Paul and Silas were suffering physically, but their identity and hope in Christ had not changed. Help your group see that Christian joy is not rooted in circumstances going well, but in confidence that God is still present and at work even in hardship.

If we tie worship only to good circumstances, our faith will feel unstable when life becomes difficult. This passage reminds believers that worship can become one of the strongest testimonies during seasons of suffering.

Guide Discussion

Leader Note: You do not need to cover every question. Use the questions that best help your group engage with the passage.

1. **Good for Students.** What evidence do we see that the jailer's faith in Jesus was genuine?
 2. **Discuss.** Why is joy such a common response when someone truly understands the gospel?
 3. **Discuss.** Why did each member of the jailer's household still need to personally respond to the gospel?
 4. **Deeper Dive.** When people watch the way you respond to hardship, what conclusions are they likely to draw about your trust in God?
 5. ★ **Reflection - write answers on an index card.** What would need to change in your heart for suffering and inconvenience to become opportunities for worship and witness instead of frustration and complaint?
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Application Exercise (5-7 min)

Option 1: Reflective Prayer

Transition into Exercise: "Paul and Silas responded to suffering with prayer and worship because they trusted that God was still present and at work. Let's spend a few moments personally reflecting on what it looks like to trust and worship God during difficult circumstances."

Time: 5-7 minutes

Supplies: Index card

Instructions

Invite members to quietly reread Acts 16:25:

"About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

Encourage members to spend a few quiet moments rewriting the verse as a personal prayer to God. They may reflect on:

- current hardships or frustrations
- areas where trust feels difficult
- a desire to worship faithfully even in challenging circumstances

If appropriate, invite a few volunteers to share portions of their prayer with the group.

Option 2: Song Reflection - “Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me” by City Alight

(scan the QR code or [click here](#) for the link to the song!)



Transition into Exercise: “The joy and worship we see in Acts 16 were not rooted in comfortable circumstances, but in confidence in Christ. Let’s take a few moments to reflect on that same kind of trust and worship through this song.”

Time: 5–6 minutes

Supplies: Index Cards

Instructions

Play the song as a group (or read a portion of the lyrics). Have members write down what stands out to them as the song plays.

Then ask 1-2 of the questions below:

- Which line stood out to you most?
- How does this song reflect the attitude Paul and Silas displayed in prison?
- What does this song teach us about relying on Christ during hardship?

Transition into Conclusion:

“Acts 16 reminds us that God often uses our hardest moments as opportunities to display trust, worship, and faithful witness. As we leave today, may we remember that the way we respond to hardship can become a powerful testimony that points others toward Jesus.”

Conclusion (5 min)

Leader Note: Copy and paste the Conclusion in your Life Group’s group chat (e.g. text, GroupMe, email thread, etc.) and encourage them to keep these questions in mind and to memorize the Key Verse during the week.

Final Takeaway

After discussion concludes, read the takeaway statement:

God can use even difficult circumstances as opportunities for worship, witness, and gospel transformation.

This Week's Challenge

Reflect:

Paul and Silas did not allow suffering to silence their worship or weaken their witness. Instead, their trust in God became a testimony that helped lead others to salvation. This week, consider how your response to hardship may either point people toward Christ or away from Him.

- What situation in your life currently gives you the greatest opportunity to trust God publicly?
- How might worship change your perspective in the middle of hardship?
- Who around you may be watching how you respond to difficulty?
- What is one intentional way you can represent Christ faithfully this week?

Memorize:

Review daily and/or memorize the **Key Verse** from this passage to remind yourself to run to God in hardship and be aware of possible witnessing opportunities in the midst of suffering.

Acts 16:25 - "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

Prayer

Either pray something like the guide below, or invite someone in the group to close in prayer.

Father, thank You for the example of Paul and Silas, who chose worship and trust even in the middle of suffering. Help us to become people who respond to hardship with faith instead of fear, knowing that others are watching how we live and what we truly believe about You. May our worship, our words, and our lives point people toward Jesus, even in the darkest moments. Amen.