

## *Acts 1 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Five: Paul's Second Missionary Journey – Acts 15:36-18:22, 1 and 2 Thessalonians*

Read Acts 15:36-16:10.

- 1) Describe the split that occurred prior to Paul's departure on his second missionary journey. (Refer also to Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13. Then consider Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, and Philemon 24, written by Paul later in his ministry.) Why do you think Luke might have included such a seemingly unpleasant event in his writings? **John Mark was the son of Mary, in whose home the early church met (apparently the home was large enough, implying she was a woman of means), as well as Barnabas' cousin (Colossians 4:10) Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but he soon abandoned them (Acts 12:25, 13:13, and 15:38). Nevertheless, Barnabas wanted Mark to go on a second journey with them. Paul disagreed, and as a result, he and Barnabas chose to travel separately. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and took a land route. According to Paul's later epistles, Mark eventually proved himself to Paul and became one of his trusted ministry partners. None of the writers of the Scriptures hesitated to include facts that were unpleasant about their "heroes." The fact that the Bible includes such information proves it all the more to be reliable, not just a fabricated story. However, in this case, the additional information in Paul's later letters encourages us to trust God when disagreements lead to division because He can use division to multiply ministry.**
- 2) Using the map you received in Lesson 4, trace the cities listed between 15:40 and 16:10 that Paul, Silas and Timothy visited on this second missionary journey. **Antioch through Syria and Cilicia to Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia in Galatia; from Troas through Samothrace and Neapolis to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus; back through Caesarea to Antioch.**
- 3) What can you learn from Acts 16:6-10 about the leading of God in your life? **When one is sincerely seeking to follow the Lord, He will make the way clear. We should not be discouraged when we receive "no," we receive because the Lord closes certain "doors" (opportunities) so that we will be free to walk through the right "door" when He opens it. Personal sharing**

Read Acts 16:11-18:22, tracing the remaining cities Paul visited in his second journey on your map.

- 4) List a few pieces of key information about Paul's ministry in each of these cities:
  - a) **Philippi** Luke joined Paul and Silas in Philippi (compare 16:10 with 16:40). Apparently, there was no synagogue in Philippi. Even though Lydia and the Philippian jailer and their households are the only people named as being converted, the accusation that Paul and Silas were "throwing the city into an uproar" (16:20) implies that their influence was widespread. The account of Paul and Silas singing in prison in the middle of the night after being severely flogged is especially touching and exemplary.
  - b) **Thessalonica** A large and influential group was converted (both Jews and Gentiles). The jealous Jews incited a riot, attempting to accuse or harm Paul, but they could only find his host, Jason. Apparently, the Jews put Jason and some other supporters of Paul in a legal situation that forced Paul and his co-workers to leave the city.
  - c) **Berea** The Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, searching the Scriptures diligently to confirm the truth of Paul's message. Thessalonian Jews arrived to agitate the crowds in Berea. Silas and Timothy remained, but Paul left for Athens.
  - d) **Athens** Paul debated with philosophers in this city, delivering his famous "Mars Hill" (Areopagus) address. There is no direct mention of the establishment of a church in Athens but a few were converted.

- e) Corinth Paul became acquainted with Aquila and Priscilla, who became his dear Jewish friends and coworkers. The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision telling him to remain in Corinth because He had “many people in this city” (18:10). Paul remained a year and a half and during that time, the Jews once again created legal trouble.
  - f) Ephesus Paul’s stop in Ephesus was brief (he was en route to Jerusalem to fulfill a vow). The Ephesians wanted him to stay longer and so he left Aquila and Priscilla with them.
- 5) The Athenians worshipped many gods but had no knowledge of the one true God. What would they have learned about Him by listening to Paul’s speech in Acts 17:22-31? The one true God is altogether different from any other god or idol. He cannot be contained by space. He is the Giver of life, not dependent on man, and lacks nothing. He made all people (not just one people group). He is completely sovereign over all of life, even determining when and where people live. He desires that we seek Him and is available to everyone who does. God raised Jesus from the dead. Since God has provided a way for us to know Him (through Christ [the “man”]), there is no excuse for not seeking Him. He will one day judge every man accordingly.
- 6) Paul’s experiences prove that there is nothing boring about a life devoted to serving Christ. Boredom is not primarily a matter of busy-ness but of purpose. What kinds of things have helped you discover God’s good purpose for your life (include information pertaining to His general purpose as well as His specific callings)? If you struggle to answer this, will you commit to sincerely praying this week to identify God’s purpose for you? If you answered the first question, also tell how the Lord is using His purposes to keep your life interesting. **Personal sharing**

#### Read 1 Thessalonians 1-3.

- 7) What seems to be one of the main reasons Paul wrote the Thessalonians so shortly after leaving them? (Note what may have been the total amount of time Paul spent in Thessalonica on this journey, according to Acts 17:2.) It seems Paul was burdened over the fact that he was forced to leave the Thessalonians sooner than he wished. Based on Acts 17:2, some think Paul’s stay in Thessalonica was only three short weeks. Others say that since he practiced his trade there, it is likely he was there longer. The Thessalonians were so new in their faith and were apparently continuing to be opposed by the same Jews who had opposed Paul. Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica while he himself was in Athens (1 Thessalonians 3:2) to assess the state of the church and was very encouraged by the report Timothy eventually brought him (1 Thessalonians 3:6) in Corinth.
- 8) Make a list of the words and phrases Paul used in 1 Thessalonians 1-2 to describe ways he modeled service to the Thessalonians (and to us). Paul modeled service by praying for the Thessalonians continually (1:2-3), sharing the gospel in spite of opposition (2:2), serving with pure motives (2:3), “not trying to please men but God” (2:4), never using flattery or being greedy (2:5), not looking for their praise and serving with gentleness, sacrificial love, and working hard so others wouldn’t be burdened (2:6-9). He served with holiness, righteousness and blamelessness, encouraging, comforting and urging them to live worthy lives, just as a father would (2:10-12).
- 9) How burdened are you to reach out to people you know who are younger in the faith? If you do not already keep a physical or mental prayer list, start one today that includes these individuals by name. **Personal sharing**

#### Read 1 Thessalonians 4-5.

- 10) What common reference is found in the final verses of each of the five chapters of 1 Thessalonians? A reference to Christ’s Second Coming: “wait for His Son from Heaven” (1:10), “in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes” (2:19), “when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones” (3:13), “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (4:17), “blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:23)

- 11) The Thessalonians were apparently expecting the Lord Jesus to return very soon, which left them concerned about what would happen to believers who had died while awaiting Him. Paul relieved their fears by explaining the order of events, as they will occur at Christ's return. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, what is that order of events? **First, a loud command, the voice of an archangel, and a trumpet call will announce the coming of Jesus back to earth. Then, the Christians who have already died will rise. After that, all living believers will be caught up together with them in the air, and we will be with the Lord forever.**
- 12) In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul described qualities that ought to define a believer in Christ.
- What specific qualities did Paul say ought to result from the believer's understanding of Christ's Second Coming (5:4-11)? **Alertness, self-control (5:6), and encouraging one another (5:11)**
  - Which of the characteristics described in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 challenges you most? **Personal sharing**

Read 2 Thessalonians 1-3.

- 13) What facts do you learn about the Second Coming of Christ in 2 Thessalonians 1 that Paul did not specifically mention in his first letter to the Thessalonians? **Jesus will come "in blazing fire with his powerful angels" (1:7) Eternal punishment of those who do not know God will occur on the day He comes (1:8-9).**
- 14) Apparently, some individuals alarmed the Thessalonians by suggesting Christ's return had already occurred. What event did Paul outline in chapter 2 in order to reassure the Thessalonians, clearly stating it must precede Christ's return (include all the facts given regarding this particular event.) **Paul reminded the Thessalonians that "the man of lawlessness" will be revealed prior to the Second Coming of Christ. However, Paul said he will not be revealed until the "one" holding back the power of lawlessness is removed (2:7). Paul taught that a "rebellion" will occur (2:3), the "man of lawlessness" will be evil and will perform counterfeit miracles that will deceive the unsaved (2:10). The man of lawlessness will oppose and exalt himself over God, proclaiming that he is God (2:4). Ultimately, this man is doomed to destruction (2:3) and will be overthrown by Christ at His coming (2:8).**
- 15) 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15 indicates that the Thessalonians expected Christ to return soon, and as a result, had stopped doing ordinary work.
- Contrast the mindset of the idle Thessalonians with the mindset of most Christians you know concerning Christ's return. **Most Christians today live as if Christ is unlikely to return soon, allowing themselves to become almost completely absorbed by their daily affairs.**
  - Tell how Paul's teachings about the believer's expectation of Christ's return in 1 and 2 Thessalonians help you determine the kind of a mindset for which you ought to aim. **Paul's exhortations in 1 and 2 Thessalonians encourage us not to set aside normal work while we wait for Christ to come. Neither are we to become so captivated by our daily affairs that the idea of Christ's return is far from our consciousness. Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to be alert, self-controlled, and encouraging to one another in expectation of Christ's return.**
  - What practice or habit could you institute that would help you maintain this mindset? **Personal sharing**