

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN UNION

How to misunderstand mission Reading Acts 16:6-15 badly

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I. God usually calls to mission like this

- specific direction, both negative and positive
 - negative vv 6, 7
 - positive vv 9-10
 - the direction goes against rational planning
- but this is a unique event in Acts
 - the Spirit never guides negatively elsewhere
 - notice the human participation and discernment v 10

This isn't God's usual practice

- Paul travels along major Roman roads, and goes to major cities

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“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”

Acts 19:10

This isn't God's usual practice

- Paul travels along major Roman roads, and goes to major cities
 - Paul spends as much time as possible in each city to establish a believing community
 - Syrian Antioch: 1 year Acts 11:26
 - Corinth: over 18 months Acts 18:11
 - Ephesus: over 2 years Acts 19:10
 - this has wider impact
 - Epaphras Colossians 1:7-8; 4:12
 - international students [Seychelles]

This isn't God's usual practice

- God calls us to think and plan as we pray v 10
 - “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.”
I Thessalonians 5:19-22
- God calls us to be open to his surprises vv 6, 7
 - e.g. sometimes the timing isn't God's timing—
Paul in Ephesus in Acts 19
 - the engines of mission: prayer and planning

2. Where you are is what's most important

- the Spirit
 - forbids them from preaching in Asia v 6
 - won't allow them to enter Bithynia v 7
- the vision of the man
 - invites them to Macedonia v 9

This isn't God's usual practice

- Jesus' promise Acts 1:8
 - "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
 - most believers are not itinerant evangelists

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“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”

1 Peter 3:15-16

This isn't God's usual practice

- Jesus' promise Acts 1:8
 - "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
 - most believers are not itinerant evangelists
 - all are called to "give the reason for the hope you have" 1 Peter 3:15
 - live and speak in a way that raises questions!

3. It all depends on us

- our obedience is the most important factor
 - Paul needed to respond to the vision and go to Macedonia vv 9-10
 - Paul and his companions went to a place of prayer v 13
- but
 - the Spirit's (negative) direction
 - the vision at night

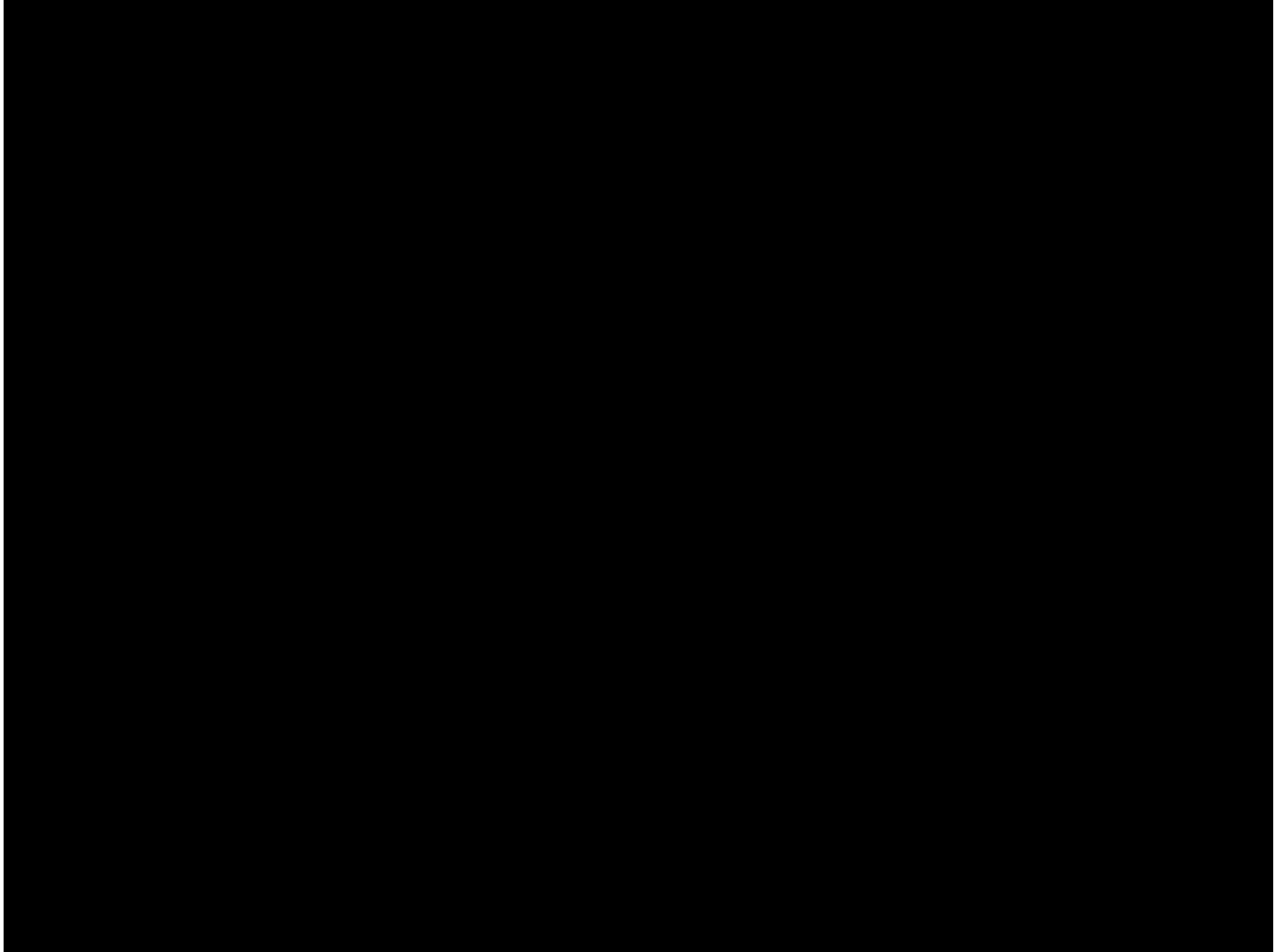
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“One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshipper of God. **The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.**”

Acts 16:14

This isn't God's usual practice

- look for those in whom God is at work—pray, pray, pray!
- take the opportunities God gives to speak
- remember the promise of the Spirit Acts 1:8
- Antmusic!



4. When God guides, it goes smoothly

- initially that seems to happen
 - Lydia's conversion v 14 [Calvin]
 - Lydia's offer of hospitality v 15
 - Paul delivering the slave girl vv 16-18
- but
 - the gospel is financially damaging v 19
 - Paul and Silas are beaten and thrown in jail vv 22-24

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“The Lord said to Ananias, ‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.’”

Acts 9:15-16

This isn't God's usual practice

- suffering is part of gospel witness
- suffering opens the door to further witness
 - the earthquake v 26
 - the jailer's family's conversion vv 29-34
- be ready to pay the price of gospel witness

In sum

- think, plan and pray
- be open to God's surprises
- witness in word and life is vital
- dependence on the Spirit is vital
- be ready to suffer in gospel witness

A prayer to pray

Lord, give me eyes to see
and grace to seize
every opportunity for you.

Bishop John Taylor-Smith
Chaplain General of HM Forces 1901–1925

You can get these slides from
Acts and More

<http://stevewalton.info>