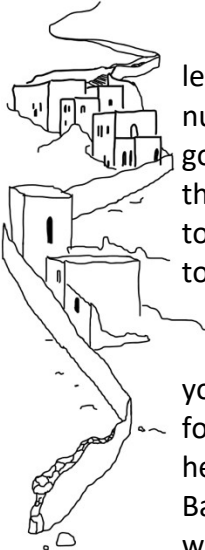




1. In what different ways do people around you demonstrate their love for the Lord Jesus? In what ways have you benefited from others demonstrating that love?
2. Verses 32-36 of Acts 15 describe a less prominent spiritual activity in the book of Acts: that of caring for already existing churches. In these verses, the actions of exhorting, strengthening, teaching, preaching, and visiting are mentioned. What are each of these activities, and how do they differ? In what way would each have been a blessing to the saints?
3. Barnabas and Paul's "breakup" could have created a major upheaval among the churches in which they were involved. However, there is no record of any such division – only of strengthening and of growing churches. How do you think a church-wide problem was avoided? What are some practical steps that should be taken (both by parties directly involved as well as by observers/bystanders) in an event such as this to ensure that it does not become a distraction from the church's mission of service for her Lord?
4. Though Timothy was young, both in a physical sense and in the amount of time that he had been a Christian, he was already "well spoken of" among the churches in two separate cities. How do you think this might have come about - how might he have gained a reputation like this? Why would this matter to Paul in selecting someone to travel with Silas and him?
5. Why was Paul's decision to circumcise Timothy not a contradiction of the decision arrived at by the council of Jerusalem? Consider 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; why do you think Paul made that decision? What might have been the consequences if he had not circumcised Timothy? What might a similar decision look like in our culture today?
6. Taken in isolation, the Spirit's leading in 16:6-8 could seem highly confusing. However, an understanding of God's complete plan begins to be revealed in verses 9-10 and clears up that confusion considerably. Have you ever been in a situation where you were confident of God's leading and yet did not understand the reason for it? Was it difficult to be obedient in the moment? Why or why not? At a later date, did you understand more clearly the possible reasons for that leading?
7. Why do you think God's leading in verse 9 took the form it did - a vision of an unnamed Macedonian, rather than perhaps a vision of the Lord Himself or hearing His voice? How can this man's pleading for help be a good reminder for us as we look at sharing our faith with those around us who do not yet know our Lord?
8. Hospitable actions such as Lydia's in 16:15 are discussed by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 10:41. Read this verse and consider the full implications of Jesus' words; why do you think He places such a high value on hospitality shown towards His followers? Think about the situation; why is it right for Lydia to receive a missionary's reward from the Lord as a result of her receiving Paul's team in this way?
9. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. How should the love of the Lord Jesus for us affect our service for Him? In what different ways did we see saints responding in love to their Lord in our passage today? In what specific ways do you think the Lord Jesus wants you to respond to His love this week?



Compelled by the Love of Christ
Leader Notes for Acts 15:32-16:15



Last week, we saw the good news about Jesus and His finished work defended by the leaders of the church. This week we will see the good news lived out practically in the lives of a number of different saints, focusing primarily on Paul. Similar to last week, there is teaching going on at Antioch, but this time it is good teaching – the church was being strengthened in the truths of the Lord Jesus by Paul and Barnabas, as well as by those who came from Jerusalem to deliver the decision of the council. One member of this latter group – Silas – will soon come to play a prominent role in the book of Acts.

Tension was created between Paul and Barnabas when Barnabas wanted to bring his young cousin, Mark, along on a visit with Paul and himself to see how the churches they founded were doing. Paul did not want Mark back on another journey with them so soon after he failed them earlier. While this disagreement ended up splitting up these two godly men, Barnabas and Paul, peace was maintained in the church, and ultimately two mission teams were formed – one headed up by Paul, and one headed up by Barnabas. We follow Paul for the remainder of the book of Acts.

Continuing the pattern established by the Lord Jesus of going out “two by two,” Paul chose Silas as his traveling companion. They were strengthening the churches together. Upon arriving in Derbe and Lystra, Paul chose a godly young disciple named Timothy to join their group as well. Timothy was a young man at this time - probably in his mid to late teens - and had most likely come to know the Lord during Paul’s previous trip through the area (14:1-23). To remove a possible hindrance towards sharing the gospel with the Jews that they met, Timothy was circumcised before continuing on the journey with Paul and Silas. The three of them continued strengthening the churches as they delivered the message from the Jerusalem council, and the churches they visited increased numerically.

Things became somewhat mystifying as God began to close doors to various places where the team wanted to share the gospel, but then things cleared up as they were directed to cross over from Troas in Asia Minor into Macedonia, to begin the first recorded Christian witness on European soil. A fourth member joined the team in Troas for the sea journey to Philippi, when the text switches from “they” to “we” in verse 10. This tells us that Luke, the author of Acts, was now part of this missionary team. The first recorded convert on European soil, though, was actually someone from Asia Minor – from Thyatira. After responding to the gospel message, this God-worshipping lady, Lydia, opened up her home as a base of operations for the whole missionary team to continue their work in Philippi. We leave them here to see what more God will do through them in the future.