



Lydia

We sailed straight from Troas to Samothrace, and the next day we arrived in Neapolis. From there we went to Philippi, which is a Roman colony in the first district of Macedonia. We spent several days in Philippi. Then on the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to a place by the river, where we thought there would be a Jewish

meeting place for prayer. We sat down and talked with the women who came.

One of them was Lydia, who was from the city of Thyatira and sold expensive purple cloth. She was a worshiper of the Lord God, and he made her willing to accept what Paul was saying. Then after she and her family were baptized, she kept on begging us, "If you think I really do have faith in the Lord, come stay in my home." Finally, we accepted her invitation. Acts 16:11-15

Background

The city of Philippi was named after Alexander the Great's father who conquered it in 355 BC. Local gold mines financed many military campaigns. The city was fortunate because it backed the winning side of Mark Anthony and Octavian (Caesar Augustus) versus Cassius and Brutus in 42 B.C. Many considered the battle a moral victory because Brutus and Cassius had assassinated Julius Caesar. They both lost their lives. Many Philippians were rewarded with the great gift of Roman freedom and privilege.

The city was a major seaport located between Greece and Turkey. It was a trading center along the Via Egnatia, the major Roman highway that linked Western Europe with the Persian East. A cosmopolitan city, Philippi blended Greek and Latin traditions. Philippi was the site of the first Christian church in Europe.

Lydia lived in Philippi and was known as a "God fearing" person. This meant she was a Gentile who converted to Judaism. Many people were attracted by Jewish discipline, business success,

moral character, love of family, and kindness towards others. She rejected the pagan lifestyle and sought a closer walk with God

Lydia was a successful businesswoman. She sold purple cloth, a very rare commodity. The coloring was obtained from scraping thousands of small carnivorous shellfish (like crab and lobster). Roman law (and cost) limited its use to only the privileged classes.

She belonged to a local Jewish congregation that had no building or synagogue. They worshiped weekly on the bank of a local river. One Sabbath, Paul and Silas joined them at worship and shared the Good News. While Paul was preaching, "the Lord opened her heart" (Acts 16: 14). Lydia was a decisive person. This was the salvation she was seeking. She dedicated her life to Christ. Her entire household was baptized with her.

Paul and Silas experienced difficult times in Philippi. They were falsely arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. There was an earthquake, and they used the crisis as an opportunity to witness to their fellow prisoners. They sang hymns of praise. They even witnessed to their jailer. Paul and Silas, entrepreneurs for Christ, never missed an opportunity to evangelize. Eventually they were released and Lydia welcomed them once again into her home.

The church in Philippi became Paul's favorite. Years later, while imprisoned, Paul would receive gifts of support from Philippi (Philippians 4:16). When starvation struck the mother church in Jerusalem, Philippi came to the rescue with great generosity. Paul referred to Philippi as a community of great joy (Philippians 1:3).

Reflections

Lydia knew the rich and famous of her day but found her purpose in life through her relationship with the risen Lord Jesus. Lydia demonstrated the confidence and determination of an entrepreneur. Lydia's conviction was evident when she urged Paul and companions to stay at her home. They accepted because of her strong insistence. She was clearly a person used to getting her own way. She was a woman on a mission.

Lydia also demonstrated the social grace of hospitality. She generously shared her possessions with others. Later her home would become headquarters for the newly formed Christian community in Philippi. Her hospitality was a remarkable gift!

Lydia knew a real king when she saw one. Christ was dressed in clothes of compassion, forgiveness, and friendship. Lydia and the church of Philippi shared that message with others.

- True friendship is always active, not passive. Jesus asks us to care for those in need. Lydia and the Philippian church repeatedly showed their great generosity.
- A friend is candid. God wants us to honestly engage with him. True friends are open with each other. Lydia did not hesitate to speak her mind.
- A friend is giving. True friends are willing to share everything. The church in Philippi generously helped others in need.
- A friend is loyal. The Philippians earned special freedoms because of loyalty to Rome. Now they were devoted to God. Philippi faithfully supported Paul when he was arrested.
- A friend can be a source of Joy. The book of Philippians is known as the epistle of joy. Like Paul and Silas, we can experience great joy after times of significant struggle. Joy is like the sunrise that follows the darkest hours of our lives.

John Scriven, a Canadian immigrant, understood the meaning of true friendship. During a particularly difficult time in his life, he tragically suffered the loss of loved ones. Rather than submit to anger or depression, he dedicated himself to helping others. He

devoted his days (and possessions) to the feeding and caring for widows, orphans, and the poor. He could not afford to visit his ailing mother (back in England) so he wrote her these words:

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief's to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!

In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there. (1855)

Strength Finders talent: Maximizer

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252299/maximizer-theme.aspx>

Those with the Maximizer talent can initiate personal and group transformation. Lydia was certainly a positive agent of change. She was a successful female businesswoman in an age that there must have been many roadblocks. She was also leader of a transformative congregation that made a difference for it's members and others in need. Since the beginning of history, those who extended "hospitality", were known as people who

were seeking excellence. God has been generous to us. We should be generous for others.

I'm sure Lydia was successful in business because she strove for excellence. The world often emphasizes quantity over quality. Lydia would not settle for second best for herself and others. I also believe she was "centered" in helping others. Her success was their success. Lydia was the first "European" convert and baptized. Lydia has inspired women and men for thousands of years to follow Jesus Christ who is the greatest positive change in history.

Enneagram connections: Nine

Lydia may have been a high level nine. These are people who can maximize the virtue of "right action". Lydia made the right decisions in her personal life, business, and spiritual journey. As a nine, she was highly tuned into the needs of others and took positive steps when needed. She did not hesitate to be baptized and encouraged others to do so when she first heard the "Good News". She also took right action when she offered hospitality to Paul and Silas. Finally she took right action when she and the people of Philippi sent much needed relief to others in need.

As a healthy nine she was also in touch with her arrows. Her three arrow empowered her to run a successful business that delivered a quality product but also gainful employment for many others (particularly women). Her six-arrow enabled her to positively lead the new faith community. She knew that new congregation needed to help others to remain healthy. Paul the missionary observed this generosity of spirit and wrote that Philippi was his favorite church.

<https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-nine>

Questions

1. What does it mean to have Jesus as a friend? Is your friendship with Jesus active? How does this impact your other friendships?

2. What characteristics make someone a Christian businessperson? Can you think of specific examples?
3. The church in Philippi was known for its generosity and joy. In what ways is your church helping others? Sharing joy?

