

A certain woman

Notes on the Bible readings

- Paul is called by a Macedonian man in a dream to cross the sea from Turkey to Macedonia (northern Greece), to visit Europe for the first time. He is led by the Holy Spirit to the Greek city of Philippi, in the Roman Empire.
- Lydia is a God-fearing Gentile and prominent local businesswoman, who sells expensive purple cloth, dyed in her home town of Thyatira. A lot of women were attracted to Jewish values and beliefs at this time. Philippi had a small Jewish population and probably no synagogue, so on the sabbath Paul goes to the river, which was a place where local people were known to pray. Lydia hears Paul teaching by the river and the Lord 'opens her heart' (v.14).
- Lydia's curiosity leads her to believe in Paul's God and Paul baptizes her and her whole household (suggesting she was head of the family). In accepting her hospitality, Paul is demonstrating, like Peter, his acceptance of Gentiles. Lydia's openness to divine initiative leads to her conversion – the first in Europe – so it was a significant event in the life of the Early Church.
- In John 14, Jesus promises to send his disciples the Holy Spirit as 'a helper'. The Holy Spirit is not a tangible being and the disciples need to move from trusting a physical person to trusting God's voice in a different way. How open and responsive are we to the promptings of the Holy Spirit?

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Questions for reflection

- ▶ When have you experienced a God-given moment (e.g. an unexpected encounter)?
- ▶ How did you respond?
- ▶ How might we encourage openness to God's initiative?



A prayer for forgiveness

God of openness and love, there have been times when we have wanted to be only with our own circle of friends, and have not been willing to look beyond ourselves to welcome others whom you love.

Forgive us, and unlock our hearts and minds, that we may be inclusive and daring, and willing to go where you would lead, and meet with those you have called; for the sake of your kingdom. Amen.

A prayer for others

*Over the huge boundaries between rich and poor: we pray equality.
Over the powerful boundaries between justice and oppression:
we pray truth.*

*Over the cultural boundaries between church and community:
we pray connections.*

*Over the bitter boundaries between families: we pray reconciliation.
Over all the boundaries that divide: we pray trust and openness
and new beginnings.*

In Jesus' name. Amen.

A personal prayer

Take a piece of cloth (e.g. a large handkerchief) and tie a knot in each corner to represent four people or situations that you want to pray for during the coming week. Each day take out the cloth and say: God of the four corners of the world, I entrust to you those on my heart. Bless them with the riches of your love and draw them closer to you this day. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Live your faith

Have you a gift to share? Can you offer it 'proactively', instead of waiting to be asked?