



Lydia, the Entrepreneur

“Young Lions”

“And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, ‘If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.’ And she constrained us.” Acts 16:15

Lydia is often called the business woman in the Bible, an entrepreneur. She was born in Thyatira, a Roman colony. She was known for making purple cloth. It was made by a very special process of dying. Some say the process involved herbs, some say it was from shellfish. Either way, it was considered the cloth only fit for royalty. Several women helped her in the dying process due to the demand for her cloth. Lydia was the very first person baptized on the continent of Europe. Her parents were Roman and that was very important. According to the governmental authorities, they were the blessed people. They had a special governmental protection that the other people did not have. Everyone paid the Roman government taxes, whether they were Roman or not.

Lydia’s purple cloth was immediately seen as something different and the royalty wanted it for their own. Soon, it became known as the fabric of the rich people, and Lydia had a business which was probably far beyond her wildest dreams. The purple dye came from the shellfish. The juice was white while it was in the veins of the fish, but when it was exposed to the sun, the liquid changed into bright purple. Dyes were natural, not synthetic, and the dye for purple was made from a juice found in minute quantities in the shellfish. Because it was so expensive it became a statement of status and wealth.

Lydia had heard about Jesus and his teachings and often went to the river to pray. It was away from the authorities and it was safe there. She also told the women she worked with about Jesus and they often prayed with her. One day while they were praying, they were approached by Paul, Timothy, and Silas, and Luke. It was evident from the start that Paul was the leader, but she also admired the younger men also - Timothy and Luke. Paul and Timothy were also Roman citizens so Lydia must have felt a special relationship with them.

As the men talked with Lydia and the other women, they learned more about Jesus and his teachings. They also learned how Paul and his men had not wanted to come to Philippi. Paul had planned to take the message to people in Asia, but that way was blocked, and then they wanted to go to Bithynia, but the spirit wouldn’t let them go there either. Paul told them that one night he had a dream to go to Macedonia which was across the sea. As they began to get ready for their journey, they knew this was the way the Holy Spirit wanted them to go. As they reached Macedonia, they walked to Philippi, the main city in that part of Macedonia and even more importantly, a Roman colony. They lingered there for a few days to rest and then wanted to pray with some people on the Sabbath. They had heard there was a prayer meeting down there, and when they arrived, they found Lydia and the other women.

Lydia felt this was an answer to her prayers and wanted to serve their Lord and Saviour. She pleaded with them "If you're confident that I'm in this with you and believe in the Master truly, come home with me and be my guests." They hesitated, but Lydia wouldn't take “No” for an answer. All the women were baptized. Lydia was privileged to give shelter to Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

While the men were in Philippi, they were approached by a slave girl who was being used by the government authorities. Paul commanded that the spirits in her be released and they were. Now the authorities were upset. They beat Paul and Silas and had them put in jail. A great earthquake occurred and the jail doors were opened. The jailer feared for his life and was about to kill himself when Paul spoke up that all of them were still there. No one had fled. The jailer said “Sirs, what do I have to do to be saved, to really live?” They said, ‘Put your entire trust in the Master Jesus. Then you'll live as you were meant to live—and everyone in your house included!’ That night the jailer and his entire household were baptized. But now the authorities wanted to get rid of these men. Before they left the town they went back to the house of Lydia and thanked her. According to many Lydia was a lifelong supporter of the ministry for Christ not only in her prayers, but also financially.

The story of the expensive purple fabric gives a new insight into Mark 15:17-18 during the crucifixion of Christ - “And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head. And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we often lose sight of what it means to take the initiative and reach out so that others may know our Christ. Help us to follow him and to do his will so that others may know the wonderful blessings that we take for granted each day. Amen

1. Lydia was not unusual. Many women witnessed for Christ. How can we witness for him in our workplace?
2. Would you have run if you had been released from the jail?
3. How important was Lydia to the church in Europe?
4. Was Lydia too brazen?
5. Lydia is often overlooked in Scripture. Are there people you know of today that give a lot behind the scenes, but are never mentioned in public?

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