

Reach further: guided by God discussion guide

based on **Acts 16.6-15** (Linked to sermon of 26/5/24)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks

This was the first in a series of talks from Acts 16-20 exploring one of Paul's missionary journeys – and what we can learn as a church about putting our church's third aim (reach further with the good news of Jesus) into practice.

Intro: Do you think of yourself as a missionary? Why / why not?

Read Acts 16.6-10

In what ways might the Holy Spirit have kept Paul & Silas from preaching in Asia and Bithynia?

How do you think they felt at the time, walking by faith not by sight?

Why do you think God didn't want them going into those places?

Have you ever felt constrained by God *not* to do something or go somewhere? What did you make of that experience at the time? As you look back, does it make more sense?

Has God ever used dreams or visions to guide you? What would it take to make you conclude that the dream was from God, not just your own imagination?

Read Acts 16.11-15

Bishop Philip pointed out that Paul & Silas had tried to go to Asia [in those days 'Asia' was a relatively small province in modern day Turkey] to preach; but God had already sent an Asian migrant (Lydia) to Europe. Paul's dream to go to Macedonia (the entry of the gospel into Europe for the first time) meant that the good news about Jesus got to Europe – but also got to the Asians. He reminded us that the first movement of Christian faith was from East to West – not from the West to the Rest.

Where have you seen God use trade and migration to help spread the gospel – as much as intentional missionary movement has helped to spread the gospel?

Philip asked us “Do we modern-day Europeans have too much pride and baggage to admit we need help sharing the gospel?” Discuss!

Why do you think God chose Lydia – an immigrant female – as the first convert on European soil?

Philip posed 4 questions for us at the end:

1. What are our next step(s) as a church, as we seek to reach further with the good news into Shirley (and beyond!) – which are the doors we should push as we try to walk by faith not by sight?

2. How can we receive more of the gifts that the global church have brought to Southampton?

3. If you see yourself as a migrant, do you know that you are God's gift to this place? Do you know why God has sent you here?

4. How might God use you in 'secular' employment – as he used Lydia – to help reach further with the good news of Jesus?

Spend some time praying through those questions (and do feed back any insights or ideas you feel may have been prompted by the Holy Spirit) – and pray that as a church, we would be able to reach further with the wonderful good news of Jesus.