

LYDIA

Acts 16:13-15

And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there*. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged *us*, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

A WOMAN OF PRAYER

A WOMAN WHO LISTENED

A BUSINESS WOMAN (CREATIVE)

A WOMAN WHO WORSHIPPED GOD

A WOMAN WHO OPENED HER HEART TO THE GOSPEL

A WOMAN WHO SHARED WITH HER HOUSEHOLD

A WOMAN WHO OBEYED AND WAS BAPTIZED

A WOMAN WHO OFFERED HOSPITALITY

Lydia

An Influential Businesswoman

Lydia came from Thyatira, a city in the western province of Lydia in Asia Minor. Her name originally might have been the designation of her home, “a woman of Lydia.” At the time Lydia met Paul, she lived at Philippi, a leading city of Macedonia on the European continent.

As a wealthy and influential businesswoman, Lydia sold articles dyed purple, a prized color made from certain mollusks. On this Sabbath, Lydia had gone to the river’s shore that had been designated by the Roman authorities of Philippi as a place of prayer and worship for the Jews. There she met Paul and Silas, who had been in Philippi only a short time. While others along the river may have rejected Paul’s words about Jesus, Lydia accepted them and became a believer. After Lydia and her entire household were baptized, she invited Paul and Silas to stay in her home. When Paul and Silas were thrown into a Philippian prison, Lydia visited them and attended to their needs. Her house became the meeting place of the first European church. She was not too busy to take time for hospitality (Acts 16:15).

Lydia’s name appears in Scripture only twice. She was seemingly the first Gentile convert in Europe, the first Christian businesswoman, and the first believer to open her home as a worship center for European Christians. Not only to Paul and the early church but also to the generations to come, Lydia proved the importance and influence of a woman of determination, foresight, and generosity.¹

¹Thomas Nelson, I. (1997, c1995). *Woman's study Bible* . (Ac 16:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The Trade in Purple Lydia's hometown, Thyatira, was a thriving manufacturing and commercial center. Its trade in purple was renowned in the Roman world. The most expensive of dyes and a mark of wealth or royalty, purple came from the murex, a shellfish found only along the northeastern section of the Mediterranean coast. Purple cloth was ranked in value with gold and was important not only for adorning emperors and temples but for tribute and international trade.

We don't know when or why Lydia relocated to Philippi, but it was a smart business move. A Latin inscription found there mentions the dyeing trade and its economic importance to the city. Philippi was the leading Roman colony of the region, located on the major east-west highway connecting Europe to the Middle East. Its people were known for trying to outdo Rome in dress and manners.

Lydia probably belonged to a local dyer's guild, a professional association. Guilds sometimes involved such pagan customs and practices as worship of the trade's patron god, feasts using food sacrificed to idols, and loose sexual morality. Lydia's conversion didn't change her occupation, but it dramatically changed her loyalty. Her business contacts likely introduced Paul to the "movers and shakers" of the Macedonian area.²

Evening, December 10 "Whose heart the Lord opened." — Acts 16:14

In Lydia's conversion there are many points of interest. It was brought about by *providential circumstances*. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, but just at the right time for hearing Paul we find her at Philippi; providence, which is the handmaid of grace, led her to the right spot. Again, *grace was preparing her soul for the blessing*—grace preparing for grace. She did not know the Saviour, but as a Jewess, she knew many truths which were excellent stepping-stones to a knowledge of Jesus. Her conversion took place in the use of the means. On the Sabbath she went when prayer was wont to be made, and there prayer was heard. Never neglect the means of grace; God *may* bless us when we are not in his house, but we have the greater reason to hope that he *will* when we are in communion with his saints. Observe the words, "Whose heart *the Lord* opened." She did not open her own heart. Her prayers did not do it; Paul did not do it. The Lord himself must open the heart, to receive the things which make for our peace. He alone can put the key into the hole of the door and open it, and get admittance for himself. He is the heart's master as he is the heart's maker. The first outward evidence of the opened heart was *obedience*. As soon as Lydia had believed in Jesus, she was baptized. It is a sweet sign of a humble and broken heart, when the child of God is willing to obey a command which is not essential to his salvation, which is not forced upon him by a selfish fear of condemnation, but is a simple act of obedience and of communion with his Master. The next evidence was *love*, manifesting itself in acts of grateful kindness to the apostles. Love to the saints has ever been a mark of the true convert. Those who do nothing for Christ or his church, give but sorry evidence of an "opened" heart. Lord, evermore give me an opened heart.³

²Thomas Nelson Publishers. (2001). *What does the Bible say about-- : The ultimate A to Z resource fully illustrated*. Nelson's A to Z series (69). Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson.

³Spurgeon, C. H. (1995). *Morning and evening : Daily readings* (December 10 PM). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.