

# ***EYES UP***

## ***LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE #9***

### **EYES UP (WEEK 9)**

**Acts 16, 18, 19 (Philippi, Corinth, Ephesus)**

**11/5/2016**

### **MAIN POINT**

We have no need to fear – God is always working out His plan and His purposes!

### **INTRODUCTION**

God can use anyone, anywhere, and any situation to accomplish His will. We have no need to fear no matter what circumstances come our way. We fix our eyes on Jesus – the author and finisher of our faith – and continue to share and live out the Gospel every day. Our Sovereign God, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, is not surprised by anything and is always at work carrying out His plan and His purposes.

### **OPENING QUESTIONS**

Because the Presidential election is this Tuesday and this year's election cycle has been particularly unsettling for many, we recommend that you spend an extended period of time in prayer for our country during your Life Group meetings this week. In order to facilitate the longer prayer time, you should plan on a shorter discussion of the Bible study and move directly to the Discussion Questions rather than starting with warm up questions. That way you'll have time enough to pray at the end.

Some Life Groups will meet prior to the election results being released and others after, but the primary focus of your prayer time should be the same. Use 1 Timothy 2:1-4 as an example. This should not turn into a political discussion. Rather, it should be a serious time of prayer for our country and its leaders. Follow the biblical model when lifting up our national, state, and local leaders before the Lord. Also, pray for Pastor Heath, our church leadership, and all within our church body as we seek to model and share the hope, peace, light, and salvation that come only through Jesus Christ. Praying together is an important part "doing life together" as a Life Group, and this will provide a great opportunity to join your hearts together in unity.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

READ ACTS 16:11-40 (Philippi) **or** ACTS 18:1-17 (Corinth) **or** ACTS 19 (Ephesus)

*Some groups may want to study how God worked in more than one city, but we recommend that you select one of the cities to focus on for your group discussion.*

What was the general situation in the city when Paul arrived?

What was Paul's approach to sharing the Gospel in the city?

What opposition did Paul face?

How did God work in the situation to accomplish His purposes?

What can we learn about fear and encouragement from the passage?

What practical lessons are there for us to live out this week in light of the passage?

READ PSALM 27:1 and HEBREWS 12:1-2

What encouragement do you find in these verses?

Why shouldn't we fear if we are followers of Jesus?

What does it mean that the Lord is the "strength of my life?"

From a practical standpoint, how do we "keep our eyes on Jesus" on a daily basis?

## **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

What can we learn about God, His purposes, and living for Him from these passages?

What specific and practical steps should we take this week in light of the lessons that we learned from the passages? How can we be intentional about helping each other?

**PRAYER** (*extended time of prayer for our country, church, and each other*)

## COMMENTARY

Philippi was the first Macedonian city in which Paul witnessed. It was a Roman colony so it carried the right of freedom, the right of exemption from tax, and the right of holding land in full ownership. The account in Acts 16 is told in four parts: the conversion of Lydia (11-15), the arrest of Paul and Silas (16-24), the conversion of the Philippian jailer (25-34), and the release of Paul and Silas by the magistrates (35-40). We see God miraculously working out His purposes for the city even in the face of opposition for Paul.

Corinth was the leading political and commercial center in Greece. It was 46 miles west of Athens and was very strategically located since virtually all traffic between northern and southern Greece had to pass through the city. Up to this point, opposition to Paul's ministry usually forced him to leave a city. But the Lord assured him in a vision that he would have successful ministry in Corinth and would suffer no further harm, so Paul stayed for 18 months (18:10-11). God's assurance was immediately affirmed by Paul's deliverance from an attempt to condemn him before the proconsul. Verses 9-10 provide some key points of encouragement: (1) do not be afraid; (2) go on speaking and do not be silent; (3) I am with you; (4) no one will attack you to harm you; and (5) I have many in this city who are my people. Opposition came in Corinth much like in Philippi, but once again, so did divine protection.

Ephesus was the leading commercial city of Asia Minor, the capital of provincial Asia and the warden of the temple of Artemis (Diana). Paul stayed in Ephesus around 3 years, but after about 2 years God gave "special miracles" – amazing demonstrations of God's power, and people kept showing up. But Satan used Demetrius to stir up a mob (25,000) against Paul in an attempt to stop the spread of the Gospel. Paul was in mortal danger so the disciples held him back from the crowd (19:30). God then used a town clerk to quiet the crowd. Luke's extensive report of the careful reasoning of the clerk may have provided an important basis with which Christians in other cities could have defended themselves, since Luke shows here that the Christian gospel was not contrary to the Roman rule of law and was not disruptive of public order.

God can use anyone, anywhere, and any situation to accomplish His will. We have no need to fear no matter what circumstances come our way. We fix our eyes on Jesus – the author and finisher of our faith – and continue to share and live out the Gospel every day. Our Sovereign God, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, is not surprised by anything and is always at work carrying out His plan and His purposes. We must remain obedient to His calling and faithful to His commission to take the Gospel to all nations – starting with our local communities and spheres of influence.