

Paul and Silas - Trusting in God

- Acts 16 v 11 -40 (NIV)

▶ Memory Verse:

- ▶ 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
do not depend on your own
understanding'

Proverbs 3 v 5 (NLT)

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- ▶ When we are sharing and teaching the scriptures with our GFS Members:
- ▶ We are building on our Bible Study from last year of God is Love for the girls and leaders to know that we can Trust God in every situation
- ▶ There are many ways to share the story, here are some ideas, but you will have many more ideas that will best suit the girls you have in your group
- ▶ Pray for God's guidance as you share this story - think of our memory verse!
- ▶ Have FUN
- ▶ Know that if you enjoy something you will remember it
- ▶ Our members face many situations each and every day, they need to know that they can Trust God to be with them - they are never alone

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- ▶ This is an amazing passage of scripture, in it we find:
 - ❖ God is with us in all situations
 - ❖ We have peace and contentment when we trust in God
 - ❖ People coming to faith in God through a conversation
 - ❖ People coming to faith through an earthquake and Paul and Silas' witness
 - ❖ Injustice from those that should have known better - the magistrates
 - ❖ Society often watches to see how Christians respond in difficult circumstances
 - ❖ The worth of a life - female slave
 - ❖ Successful business woman - Lydia the seller of Purple, who still practised hospitality
 - ❖ Racial and religious prejudice
 - ❖ Dangers of mob rule and not checking the facts

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- ▶ **Background**
 - ❖ Philippi had many people from around the Roman Empire living in it
 - ❖ The Jews only had a small community - we know this as they prayed by the river, outside of the city, there were not enough Jews to have a synagogue
 - ❖ Lydia was a seller of purple - a very expensive cloth - she would have been seen as having been successful in life
 - ❖ **BUT** Lydia was seeking the truth, as a Gentile she was worshipping with the Jews
 - ❖ We read about a female slave who earned money for her owners by fortune telling - she was only of worth to her owners when she was earning money.
 - ❖ It was she who called Paul and Silas 'servants of the Most High God' - the local people would have thought she meant Zeus, not GOD.
 - ❖ Paul did not want people to believe in idols, so he commanded the fortune telling spirit to come out of her.

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- ❖ Roman Citizenship and yet followers of Jesus Christ
- ❖ We are familiar with needing a passport if we travel and so we can be Christians and still have a passport that states that we are a citizen of a particular country
- ❖ In Paul and Silas time, the most important thing to have was to be a Roman Citizenship - you could buy citizenship or own it because of where you were born.
- ❖ This meant that Paul and Silas were denied the rights of their earthly citizenship, but nothing could deny them the rights of being followers of GOD

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- ▶ **We can see how the magistrates were ‘swept along by mob rule’**
- ❖ They listened to the slave owners when they said ‘advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice - but they never said what these unlawful customs were!!
- ❖ The slave owners referred to Paul and Silas being Jewish
- ❖ The slave owners never mentioned that they were losing money!
- ❖ The magistrates never checked if Paul and Silas were Roman citizens
- ❖ The magistrates had them severely flogged and put in prison

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▶ **What does it mean to be a Roman Citizen?**

By Roman Law, as a Roman Citizen, if you were a prisoner you could not be:

- Executed
- Flogged
- Tortured
- Put in Prison

Without a public hearing first!!

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Yet here in Philippi, we see:

- ▶ Paul and Silas were severely flogged
- ▶ Not only put in prison, but placed in the inner cell
- ▶ The other prisoners probably realised that Paul and Silas were innocent
- ▶ We might have expected them to protest their innocence
- ▶ Instead, they prayed and sang hymns to God - this was not how anyone would have expected them to react!
- ▶ They were salt and light and greatly influenced those around them.
- ▶ When the earthquake struck, only the doors flew open and everyone's chains were loosened yet none of the prisoners tried to escape

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What was strange about the Jailers' response?

- ▶ In Roman times, life was harsh, if a jailer lost a prisoner then they suffered the fate of the prisoner whom they had lost
- ▶ The jailer here, could only assume when he saw the open doors that the prisoners would all have escaped and that was going to have a bad outcome for him
- ▶ **REMEMBER** - he never checked, he just assumed that the prisoners would have escaped when they had the chance. He didn't factor in the difference God can bring to a situation.
- ▶ We can see how his life was changed forever, when he saw the impact of God in the lives of Paul and Silas and he and his household came to faith.
- ▶ The Jailer practised hospitality to Paul and Silas when he cared for their wounds and had a meal prepared for them

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The Magistrates wanted only to protect their own lives

- ▶ After the earthquake, they became aware of Paul and Silas' Roman Citizenship - this would have been troubling news for them!
- ▶ They were in big trouble for the flogging and imprisonment of Paul and Silas without a hearing
- ▶ They wanted the prisoners to leave quietly and they could then put their own interpretation on the whole event - no doubt to the detriment of Paul and Silas
- ▶ Instead, they had to face up to the Consequences of their Actions

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Paul and Silas' Response

- ▶ It was important for Paul and Silas to be escorted from the prison by the magistrates - this was visual proof of their innocence
- ▶ The passage would indicate that Paul and Silas were put into prison in the dark but were escorted out of prison in DAYLIGHT
- ▶ It meant that the local church was not under any cloud of suspicion
- ▶ When they spoke about God, people would know it to be the truth and that truth and integrity was important for the churches' witness
- ▶ Paul and Silas continued to encourage and teach the local church while enjoying hospitality at Lydia's home.

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▶ **So what can we learn and apply from this passage**

We need to stop doing things our own way and submit to following Jesus.

Many refuse to give their burdens up and just carry them around.

Jesus tells us to put them down and rest in Him.

That is why we can think of people around us in our communities who are dealing with difficult situations, but their faith in God helps them to cope and meet the challenges each day brings, to the extent that they are a wonderful witness of God's mercy and kindness.

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At the darkest point in the night,

At the lowest point of their ministry,

In the worst of conditions,

They praised and prayed to God

So like Paul and Silas

Don't wait for the morning to start praising and thanking God

Don't wait until the doors of your prison open before you praise and worship God

Don't wait to the morning to start getting your JOY!