

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Sermon Series: Empowered
Title: History is a Story Written by the Finger of God
Speaker: Steve Berg
Text: Acts 16:1-34
Date: February 18, 2018



WARM-UP

Have you ever woken up in the middle of the night and wondered if that was God giving you a vision? Or was it just bad pizza? Share your story.

DISCUSSION

Quick Review—Acts 16:1-34

- Acts 16:6-10. Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia—this becomes a world-changer!
 - From the Mid-East and Asia Minor to the European continent; soon reaching out all the way to Rome!
- Acts 16:11-15. The beginning of the Philippian church
 - How Paul figures out how to reach out to a unique population
 - No synagogues to use as a resource for the Apostle Paul
- Acts 16:16-34. God works in miraculous ways that transforms whole families.
 - How did that happen?

Application

We can be intimidated by the accomplishments of the Apostle Paul. We can be amazed by God using a vision to Paul and friends to change the world dramatically. And then there's just us little folks in a different world than Paul lived in. How are we going to make any impact in the world?

Which one of these two statements most often colors your thinking? Are you more a fatalist (acceptance of the inevitable) **or an idealist** (visionary)?

- "It's easy to feel that you're a small fish swimming in the vast ocean of history. It's easy to feel that whatever you do, whatever your dreams are, or whatever you've achieved in your life doesn't mean much in the big scheme of things." (Steve's introduction)

OR

- You're looking for God's gracious activity in the world: "God is up to something good in this world, in our communities, and in our lives." (The Journey)

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DISCUSSION

Paul's World is a big contrast to **My World**. *Or is it?*

- Paul's full-time job was to be a missionary. Sometimes he did have to rustle up some bucks to survive, but his main purpose was preaching.

"In my world, it's exactly the reverse. I have to hustle to pay the bills, put the bread on the table, to keep the business running, take the kids to baseball or piano. During the remaining time and energy I might have, then I might have some time to do the spiritual, religious stuff."

- Do we tend to separate our work-a-day world from our mission in the world?
- Is it possible to connect those two worlds into one piece? Can we share our story **while** we're working alongside our colleagues, under our bosses, while we're shooting the breeze with our friends and neighbors?
- Paul showed up in Philippi in Acts 16:11-15. There was no synagogue in which to preach in, so Paul, Silas and Timothy had to figure out how they were going to share the Gospel with those people in Philippi. (See v.13-14)
 - How are we going to figure out how to share the Good News? Certainly, very few not-yet-believers are going to come to our church services.
 - Do we need to tweak our services so more people come? Is there another solution?
- Here's a million-dollar question: "How do we naturally create room for spiritual conversations with not-yet-Christians in our everyday lives?"
 - **Interested in creating "God Space"** (room for natural conversations)? Use the following page to work through what that might look like for you.

How can you share your story? Steve Berg shared part of his story in his message. What's your story?

This can be a very helpful template to use:

Creation: Psalm 139:13-15 – What was your sense of how you were designed for God's purposes right from the start?

Fall: What went wrong? How did you mess things up?

Redemption: How has God changed your life? What were some of the big moments that changed you?

Restoration: How is God working in your life right now, changing you – more mature, more purposeful, more joyful etc.?

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DEFINING GOD SPACE

(from "God Space" by Doug Pollock pp. 20-22)

God Space is where...

- God is felt and encountered in tangible ways that address the longings and cries of the heart.
- Seeds of faith are planted, watered and nurtured.
- Gentleness and respect are present, judgment is absent, and divine dialogue flows naturally because trust has been established.
- The invisible principles of the Kingdom of God are made visible in ways people can see, touch and feel.
- The topic of God can be explored freely without agendas, biases and personal convictions getting in the way.
- Cynics, skeptics, scoffers and spiritually curious people can raise their questions, share their doubts and even vent their anger toward God and the Church.
- People can bring their real selves out into the light and take one step at a time toward the magnetic pull they sense in their souls.
- Spiritual curiosity is aroused, and the message of Christianity becomes plausible.

Ten Questions: How open are you to the "God Space" approach to sharing the Good News?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never

Sometimes

Always

- Can you overlook un-Christian attitudes and lifestyles in your efforts to connect with others?
- Are you able to suspend your judgment for long periods of time around those who are "not-yet-Christians"?
- Do you consistently seek to understand the not-yet-Christians you know before seeking to be understood by them?
- Are you patient enough to wait for the not-yet-Christian in your life to ask for your opinion?
- Be honest: Do you *like* people who are far from God?
- Do people who are far from God like *you*? For example, would you be invited into 'party' parties?
- Does your body language communicate an open-hearted acceptance of the not-yet-Christians in your life?
- Are you able to communicate acceptance to not-yet-Christians without endorsing their lifestyles?
- In your relationships with not-yet-Christians, do you typically offer kindness rather than "rightness"?
- Is your heart consistently broken and filled with compassion for the not-yet-Christian in your life?