

Note: We do not have Pastor Josh Lilly's devotional questions at the time of this upload. The questions below have been prepared to follow the pattern of the series based on the sermon content.

Sermon: Ancient Paths, New Beginnings — A Gospel-Shaped Church

Text: Acts 16 (with Philippians 1:1–2)

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ ... The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ... And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”

— Acts 16:9, 14, 31

Day 1 — Christ Directs His Mission

Read: Acts 16:6–10; Proverbs 16:9; James 4:13–15

1. The sermon opened the series by turning to Acts 16 to show how the church at Philippi began. Why is it valuable for a church to know its “birth story” and the paths God used to start it?
2. Paul and Silas were “forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia” and the Spirit of Jesus “did not allow them” to go into Bithynia. How does this challenge the idea that every open opportunity is automatically God’s will for us right now?
3. The sermon said, “The mission of God belongs to Jesus, not us.” In what ways do we sometimes act as if we are in charge of God’s mission—making plans and expecting Him to bless them?
4. Crossroads experienced closed doors regarding expanded space and was instead led to plant a church in Chelsea. How have you seen God close a door that later proved to be His kindness and redirection?
5. What situation in your life right now feels like a closed door? How might God be preparing both you and others for a different assignment than the one you expected?

Prayer: Father, the mission belongs to You. Forgive me for treating open doors as something I control. Help me remain prayerful and flexible when You close paths I thought were right. Lead me where You will, when You will, for the advance of the gospel.

Day 2 — Remain Prayerful, Flexible, and Faithful

Read: Acts 16:6–10; Proverbs 3:5–6; Psalm 37:5

1. The first ancient path requires us to stay prayerful, flexible, and faithful. Which of these three qualities is most natural for you, and which is most difficult?
2. The sermon described the temptation to “keep hitting your head against a closed door.” When have you found yourself doing that—insisting God open a path He has clearly closed?
3. God is not saying He will never work in the places He has currently closed. He is saying, “Right now I am preparing those people—and preparing you.” How does this perspective help you wait without bitterness?
4. A mature church is willing to say, “Okay, God, we thought this, but You’re doing that, so we pivot.” What would greater flexibility under the Spirit’s leading look like in your family or in our church right now?
5. What one practical step can you take this week to grow in remaining prayerful and flexible rather than rigidly attached to your preferred plans?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You direct the mission. Keep me prayerful when I don’t understand, flexible when You change the path, and faithful to follow wherever You lead. Help our church walk this ancient path with You.

Day 3 — Christ Opens Hearts

Read: Acts 16:11–15; Ezekiel 36:26–27; Romans 10:14–17

1. There was no synagogue in Philippi, so Paul and Silas went to the riverside and found women praying. How does this show God’s preparation of both the place and the people for the gospel?
2. Lydia was already a “worshiper of God,” yet “the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.” Why is even a religiously interested person still in need of God to open the heart?
3. The sermon emphasized that this is how every conversion happens: we are born with hearts of stone; only God can give a heart of flesh. How does this truth both humble us and give us hope in evangelism?
4. God used Lydia—a woman of means who sold purple goods—as the first convert and host of the church in Philippi. How have you seen God use unexpected people and resources to advance the gospel?
5. Who in your life still has a closed heart toward Christ? How does the truth that “God always gets His Lydia” (Romans 8:29–30) encourage you to keep praying and speaking?

Prayer: Sovereign Lord, You alone open hearts. Thank You that You gave me a heart of flesh. Help me trust You completely with those I love who do not yet know You. Use my words, but do the work only You can do.

Day 4 — Proclaim Boldly and Trust God Completely

Read: Acts 16:13–15; Romans 8:28–30; 1 Corinthians 3:6–7

1. The sermon said we must “walk and chew bubble gum at the same time”: God is sovereign in opening hearts, and He commands us to preach the gospel. Why is it so easy to emphasize one of these truths and neglect the other?
2. How does remembering that “you can’t change anybody—only God can” free you from unhealthy pressure in sharing the gospel with family, friends, or co-workers?
3. Parents were especially addressed: we boldly proclaim the gospel to our children and then wait on the God who opens hearts. How does the “golden chain” of Romans 8:29–30 give rest to a parent’s anxious heart?
4. The sermon warned against manipulative practices that try to force decisions through emotion or pressure. In what subtle ways might we still try to “play God” in the conversion of others?
5. What would it look like this week for you to proclaim Christ with greater confidence while simultaneously resting more fully in God’s sovereignty over the results?

Prayer: Father, You open hearts. Free me from the illusion that I change anyone. Give me boldness to speak and rest to trust You. Help me proclaim the gospel clearly and leave the results in Your hands.

Day 5 — Christ Confronts Rival Powers and Exposes Idols

Read: Acts 16:16–24; 1 Corinthians 10:19–20; 1 John 5:21

1. The slave girl had a “spirit of Python” and brought her owners much profit by fortune-telling. Why did Paul eventually become “greatly annoyed” and command the spirit to come out in Jesus’ name?
2. The sermon noted that demons were the first to recognize Jesus in the Gospels, yet Jesus never accepted their testimony. What does this teach us about the difference between true and false spiritual witness?
3. The owners’ real idol was money and the power that protected it. When Jesus threatened their profit, they chose rebellion rather than repentance. What idols in our culture (or in your own heart) are most threatened by a clear proclamation of the gospel?
4. The sermon said, “Our strongest reactions to Jesus’ leadership often reveal our deepest idols.” When Jesus calls you to release money, change a habit, or surrender a plan, what reaction in you might be exposing an idol?
5. A gospel-shaped church places ministries, money, methods, buildings, and schedules under the lordship of Christ—even when He redirects them. What area of your life or of our church still needs to be more fully submitted to His authority?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You have all authority. Expose the idols that compete for my affection—money, control, comfort, reputation. Give me grace to prefer Your freedom over the bondage I know. Help our church bring everything under Your lordship.

Day 6 — Christ Advances the Gospel through Faithful Suffering

Read: Acts 16:22–34; Philippians 1:12–14; 1 Peter 4:12–16

1. After casting out the demon, Paul and Silas were beaten with rods and thrown into the inner prison with their feet in stocks. Why is it so natural for us to conclude, “We must have missed the door” when obedience leads to suffering?
2. About midnight they were praying and singing hymns to God—and the prisoners were listening. How does this response of worship in the middle of pain challenge the way you typically respond to hardship?
3. The sermon stressed the need to distinguish suffering for foolishness from suffering for faithfulness. Why is this distinction so important, and how can we examine our own hardships honestly?
4. God used the bloody backs of His servants and their midnight worship to open the jailer’s heart. How have you seen (or how might you yet see) God use costly obedience in your life for someone else’s salvation?
5. Our communities watch how the church responds when ministry becomes difficult. What would it look like for Crossroads (and for you personally) to respond with worship and witness rather than self-protection or complaint?

Prayer: Father, when obedience is costly, keep me from concluding that I have missed Your will. Teach me to worship and witness in the midnight hours. Use even my suffering for the advance of the gospel and the good of others.

Day 7 — “What Must I Do to Be Saved?” & a Gospel-Shaped Church

Read: Acts 16:25–34; Romans 10:9–13; Philippians 1:27

1. The jailer asked the most important question any person can ask: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Paul’s answer was pure gospel: “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.” What additions are we sometimes tempted to attach to this simple call?
2. The jailer and his household believed, were baptized, and rejoiced. How does this household response encourage both individual faith and the hope that God often works in families?
3. The sermon closed by asking whether we consider our physical lives the way Paul did—that remaining is for the sake of the church and the mission, while to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ. How does this perspective reshape the way you view both comfort and hardship?
4. These four ancient paths formed the foundation of a gospel-shaped church in Philippi. Which of the four paths do you most need to walk more faithfully right now: (1) remaining prayerful/flexible/faithful under Christ’s direction, (2) proclaiming boldly while trusting God to open hearts, (3) bringing idols under Christ’s lordship, or (4) worshiping and witnessing when obedience is costly?
5. As we begin the letter to the Philippians, how does remembering this birth story help us read the rest of the book with greater understanding and application for our own church?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, You are the One who directs the mission, opens hearts, confronts the powers, and advances the gospel through the faithful suffering of Your people. Make Crossroads—and make me—a gospel-shaped people who walk these ancient paths. Let many ask, “What must I do to be saved?” and find the answer in You alone.

Family or Group Discussion

1. Which of the four ancient paths stood out most to you from the sermon, and why? How is God inviting you (or our group) to walk that path more intentionally?
2. The sermon connected the founding of the Philippian church to our own experience of closed doors and the Chelsea plant. How has God used unexpected redirection in the life of our church or in your family for good?
3. How can our family or small group help one another remain flexible under the Spirit’s leading, keep proclaiming the gospel without carrying the weight of results, and respond to hardship with worship rather than complaint?
4. Who in your life needs to hear the simple gospel answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”? How can you both pray for them and look for an opportunity to speak this week?

Weekly Practice

Walk the ancient paths.

Remain prayerful, flexible, and faithful under Christ’s direction.
Proclaim the gospel boldly and trust God completely to open hearts.
Bring every rival power and idol under the lordship of Jesus.
Keep worshiping and witnessing when obedience becomes costly.

Know these paths deeply. Submit to them gladly. Trust the Commander who walked them first.

A gospel-shaped church is formed on these paths—together.

These questions are prepared to serve personal, family, and small-group study of the Word as we begin the Philippians series. May the Spirit who directed Paul, opened Lydia’s heart, and converted the jailer continue to direct, open, and convert—for the glory of Christ and the strengthening of His church.