

## Youth Sunday School Lesson: Women in the Bible 2/11/18

To-day's influential woman from the Bible is Lydia she was a successful businesswoman and the first Christian convert in Europe. She, before she became Christian, was known to meet with women down by a local river for a worship service outside of the more formal Jewish services. The term "worshiper of God" was used to describe her. She was from Philippi which was a city in eastern Macedonia on the east-west road between Rome and Asia.

The apostle Paul and Silas met Lydia "down by the river Gangites (the modern river Angista)." To get our geographical bearings we are in modern Northern Greece. To get our location in the Bible we are in Acts chapter 16 with the reference to Lydia beginning at verse 14. Lydia was a "seller of purple goods." Purple was a royal color even way back in Roman Empire times with only those in the ruling class able to wear it. Lydia was a supplier of royal fabric to powerful people.

After Lydia and her entire household became baptized Christians in the area would gather in her home. A "house church" is often an important early form of more settled "official" church structures. So Lydia "set the stage" for early church formations during the first century and today Christians meet in "house churches." Later when Paul was released from prison (Acts 16:40) he went immediately to Lydia's house. A book in the Bible is based on Paul's letter to the Philippians. (Phil 1:3-5) "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now."

Lydia was very brave to share with the community her being energized by the Spirit (“Christ opened her heart”) because it might have hurt her standing in the community to go against the powerful. She not only became a convert but she opened her house to other converts. As head of her household it is believed she would have been in charge of the meals. Lydia is believed to have celebrated communion in her house church which is one large piece of evidence that women can be priests and ministers in the Christian Church which wasn’t always the case.

A poem by Mary Lou Sleevi:

Church in Philippi  
sprang from a base-  
from a family, or two,  
formed by the Word.  
Paul longed to come back.  
His letter to the Philippians,  
written in prison,  
may have been read the first time  
to a church gathered for supper  
at Lydia’s house...  
To Philippi was given  
the Epistle of Joy.

Finally, Pastor David will be talking about what it is like to be a disciple. Lydia is the first convert to Christianity in Western Europe. She opens her house and is a great example of what it is to be a disciple of Christ.