Holland Park Bible Study –
This week: *ACTS 16-20*

May 9-15

Over the first fifteen chapters, we have seen the establishment of the church in Jerusalem as the Holy Spirit is given to the followers. We've seen the church grow and face persecution. Stephen is stoned and James is beheaded. Others are imprisoned for following Christ, but His church has strong devotion and began to grow – among Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. Then we saw one of the persecutors, Saul, who would be known as Paul, become a follower and lead his first missionary journey into Asia Minor. This week, Acts 16 – 20 covers Paul's second and third missionary journeys.

Paul leaves Antioch with companion Silas, and again heads to Asia Minor, this time by land, to visit and encourage the churches started during his first trip. On the way they are joined by a young disciple named Timothy, who will become a great leader in the early church. The churches are strengthened in faith and growing larger! Paul has a dream that he should go to province of Macedonia- so he journeys there, taking the gospel message into Europe and the heart of Greek thought.

Paul's first convert in Europe is Lydia of Philippi. Paul and Silas are thrown into jail for the first time there and just as Peter had been freed earlier, another miraculous escape happens – this time ending in the jailor and his family becoming Christ followers as well. Paul and his companions journey to and establish churches in Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and then Ephesus. In those places they witness to Jews and reason with Greek philosophers. Jews <u>and</u> Greeks become followers. The Lord's church is truly multiethnic, multicultural, and diverse! Their unity is in Christ and they are bound together by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

In his third missionary journey Paul travels to many of the same places to strengthen the churches. They do, but along the way there is always opposition. In fact, during their travels, they are accused of "causing trouble all over the world" (some translations "turning the world upside down) and on more than one occasion flea for their lives.

Don't miss the love in this story! As our reading for the week closes the elders of the Ephesian Church are crying and embracing Paul for they know "they would never see him again."

Multiethnic, multicultural, diverse, unity in Christ, and love for each other. This is OUR beginning… the beginning of Christ's church! ACTS is OUR story!

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