

# WE ARE OUTRAGEOUSLY GENEROUS

## CCC DNA Statements

*We are most like God when we are generous. It's all God's anyway.*

Scripture Passage: Acts 16:11–40

### OVERVIEW

Acts 16 tells the story of two individuals who showed Paul, Silas, and Timothy generosity through their hospitality and the sharing of their resources. Through the stories of Lydia and the jailer, we see examples of them providing meals, medical care, and a place to stay overnight for Paul and his companions while they were on their missionary journey. While culture plays a role in these stories, we can learn from these individuals about how generosity can help us to have a part in bringing the Kingdom of God to earth. Ultimately while all of our resources belong to God, he allows us to play a role in his redeeming work.

### GROUP OBJECTIVES

- Listen to the Spirit as you study the text together.
- Read through Acts 16:11–40 as a group.
- Discuss how generosity is displayed in the passages and what we can learn from Lydia and the jailer.
- Reflect on our own reasons for not being generous and what generosity might look like on an individual and group basis.
- Encourage one another to listen to the Spirit and look for ways to be generous with our resources.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS

- What is the most unexpected gift that you've ever received? How did this make you feel?
- Who is the most generous person you know? What does generosity look like in this person's life?

### OPENING PRAYER

- Pray for the Holy Spirit's presence in the group; acknowledge our need for the Holy Spirit's guidance; ask God to illuminate what he desires to show the group as you discuss the text and to reveal his will for your lives.

### BIBLE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

Read Acts 16:11–15.

- What are several things we learn about Lydia from the passage?
- Verse 15 implies that Paul and his companions had to be persuaded to go to her house. Why do you think that is?
- How do we see generosity in Lydia's receiving of Paul and his companions?
  - » Background context: Role of hospitality in the culture
    - Hospitality was esteemed and encouraged throughout the ancient world as a moral virtue.

<sup>1</sup>Notes on the text come from *The Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* by Stanley E. Porter & Craig A. Evans (IVP, 2000)

- Rome’s rise to power came with an elaborate network of roads and sea routes that made travel relatively easy. With this also came hostels and inns. Most of these were not ideal (they were often brothels or places with high crime such as robbery or murder). Many, and definitely the wealthy, preferred to lodge with friends and therefore private hospitality was still practiced. Hospitality was also commonly offered to complete strangers because hospitality was seen as a sign of a generous and philanthropic nature but also as a religious act where one paid homage to the divine as the protector and avenger of the stranger.
  - » How does hospitality differ in our culture?
  - » How does hospitality differ in each of the communities in our lives (families, churches, etc.)?
  - » Though hospitality was a part of the culture in the story, do you think it was difficult or sacrificial for Lydia to provide this level of hospitality?
  - » What keeps us from being hospitable? In what ways does hospitality require sacrifice from us today?
- How can one be generous with their resources in addition to hospitality?
  - » What prevents us from living generously in these ways?
  - » Share an experience where generosity has required sacrifice. What lessons can we learn through these experiences?
- How can generosity become a competition or lead towards being a performance trap?
  - » How can we liberate our generosity from becoming this?

**Read Acts 16:16–40.**

- In what ways do we see generosity from the jailer?
  - » The jailer’s generosity appears to be a response to what occurred in his life.
  - » What role does transformation play in our generosity? How about the overflow of God’s work in our lives?
- Why is generosity an important part of the Christian life?
  - » Name a few specific ways that Jesus was generous.
  - » What does generosity communicate to those on the receiving end of it?
- Name some specific steps that you can take to become more generous individually and corporately this week. Discuss these things the next time your group meets.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

- Pray for those in our city who have real needs that could be met through the generosity of others.
- Pray for God to show us ways that we can meet the needs of those around us according to what he has given us.
- Pray for a deeper understanding of God’s generosity toward us, that we may receive a fresh revelation of his love for us.