

VOYAGER

Experiences That Shape Our Faith

About the Series: Experiences are powerful and can shape our Christian faith. But experiences should not be what defines our faith. Rather, it should serve to strengthen our faith and affirm what we already know to be the facts of our faith as recorded in the Scriptures. In this sermon series, we explore the journeys of Apostle Paul and how encountering life-changing experiences can teach valuable life lessons to voyagers like us who are on a journey called life.

Part 7

Riding the Waves of Adversity

Acts 16:16-40 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

DISCUSS

On his second missionary journey with Silas in Asia Minor, Paul received the call to bring the Gospel message to Greece. He sailed from Troas in Asia Minor to Neapolis, and from there Paul and his team made their way to Philippi. While there, Paul and Silas were persecuted and put in prison. From their experience with adversity we learn four biblical principles that govern how we are to think about adversities and trials in our lives. Read Acts 16:16-40

- Who did Paul and Silas encounter while in Philippi? (v. 16)
- Is fortune-telling biblical or not? What does the Bible say about it? (Isaiah 46:9-10)
- What did the slave girl do and how did Paul feel about it (v. 17-18)? How did he respond? What do Paul's actions towards this girl communicate?

Persecution and suffering will come to followers of Jesus Christ (v. 19-24)

- What was the result of Paul's actions (v. 19)? What were Paul and Silas accused of and how were they misrepresented (v. 20-21)?
- How is Christianity misrepresented today? Can you name some things people say about our faith that are untrue? What biblical teachings are branded wrong ideas because they are "incompatible" with the culture?
- What kind of suffering did Paul and Silas experience (v. 22-24)?
- The Word of God tells us that we should expect persecution and suffering in this world. Have you been persecuted for your faith? What is the cost of following Jesus to you? What do you stand to lose when you choose to follow Christ? Are you prepared to pay the price?

Followers of Jesus can be joyful while undergoing trials (v. 25)

- What were Paul and Silas doing while in prison?
- In such a difficult situation, what do you think could be the reason(s) they were so joyful? What does James 1:2-3 tell us about our attitude toward facing challenging situations?
- What trials/suffering/hardship/challenges are you facing right now? Is there joy in your heart despite your situation? Why or why not?
- It is often said that Christians' ability to find joy in the midst of trials is one of the things that led non-believers to Christ. Have you had this experience? Share with the group.

Adversities often puts us in unique situations where we can share Jesus (v. 26-32)

- Describe the sequence of events that allowed Paul and Silas to share the gospel. To whom were they able to share it, and what was the result?
- Have you ever wondered why God puts you in unique, weird, or difficult situations, in places and circumstances you didn't choose to be in? How do you deal with it? Share your experience.
- What unique or difficult situation are you in right now? Try to view it with a mindset of how you can share Jesus during that situation. How is it now different from how you were viewing the situation before?

Hardships allow us to experience God's grace through others (v. 33-34)

- What did the jailer do for Paul and Silas? Is this normal behavior?
- When we go through difficult times, we come to that point in our lives when we realize that we need God and we need others. Is there a time when you experienced God's grace through someone unexpected? Share with the group.

REFLECT

As you go through adversity, is there a song in your heart that helps you to be joyful? Sing that song. Then pray that you may find opportunities to share the gospel. Ask Him for encouragement to help you remember His grace in your life.

PRAY

Father, thank You for Your Word. I often pray that I won't experience adversity in my life and get angry at You when I suffer or when things don't go as I had planned. I find it hard to see you at work during challenging times. Forgive me, Father. May I learn to look at trials and suffering as an opportunity to share You to others and to experience your grace through others. May these words be the song of my heart: "I've got the wonderful love of my blessed Redeemer way down in the depths of my heart, down in the depths of my heart to stay." In Jesus' name. Amen.