



VITAL CHURCHES

LESSONS FROM
THE BOOK OF ACTS

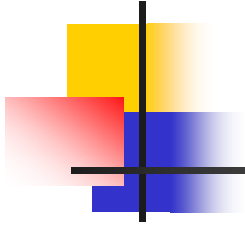
ACTS 16-19



ACTS 16:8-10

- During the 2nd journey in Asia Minor (Turkey), Paul came to Troas, an important city in antiquity; situated on the Aegean coast. Here Paul had a vision of a Macedonian calling him to come to Macedonia (Greece) and preach.



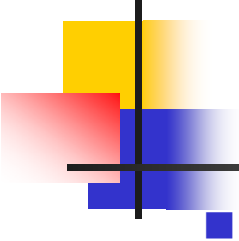


- First Lesson: God calls. God calls us to proclaim the good news. It is God who is interested in vital churches in the first place.
- Second lesson: It takes courage to act on God's call. We respond to God even though it is risky.

Acts 16:11-15

- The Apostle Paul traveled with Silas to Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia. There he founded the first Christian church in Europe.

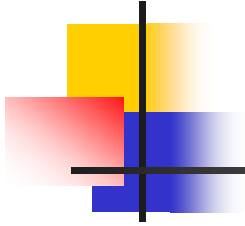




Outside Philippi, Paul met Lydia, an immigrant from Asia who was a seller of purple goods. He baptized her and her household. She was well off enough to host Paul and his party in her home.



Kenides stream where Lydia may have been baptized.

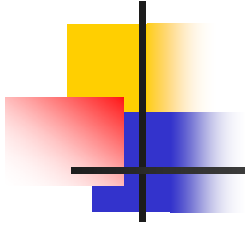


- 3rd LESSON: With God all things are possible. Even though Philippi was a Roman colony, it is here that the church begins.
- 4th LESSON: God calls unlikely people to build the church. Though Lydia was well off, she was an outsider, an immigrant woman from Asia.

ACTS 17:1-9

- In Thessalonica, Paul faced persecution and was run out of town.



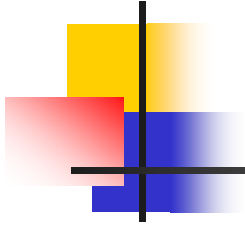


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- 5th Lesson: There will be opposition. Vital churches handle conflict. Not everyone is going to be supportive for one reason or another. Some will want a church to be the way it was.

ACTS 17: 22-31

- Paul preaches on the hill (Aeropagus) in Athens proclaiming the risen Christ as the unknown god of the Athenians.



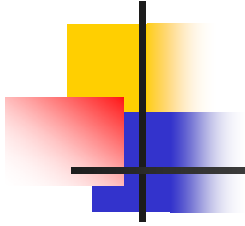


- 6th Lesson: Vital churches need to relate to their surroundings. We need to witness so that the gospel is understood by the culture in which it is preached.

ACTS 18: 1-4

- Paul preached in the synagogue in Corinth.



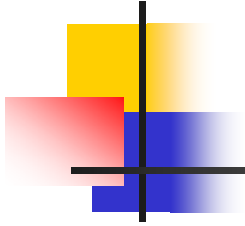


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- 7th Lesson: Begin with your strengths. Paul was a Jew, and he began with the Jews.

ACTS 19: 1-10

- Paul returned to Ephesus in Asia Minor (Turkey) after his first visit on his 2nd journey. He stayed there two years.





- 8th Lesson: Revitalization takes a long time. It is not an overnight process. It usually takes 5-10 years.



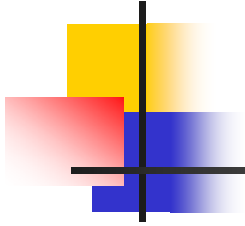
Lessons from the Book of Acts.

- God calls.
- It takes courage to act on God's call.
- With God all things are possible.
- God calls unlikely people to build the church.
- There will be opposition.
- Vital churches need to relate to their culture.
- Begin with your strengths.
- Revitalization takes a long time.



Discussion Questions.

- Which of the eight lessons was a new learning for you?
- Which of the eight lessons resonated deeply with you personally?
- Which of the eight lessons do you think your congregation needs to hear?
- Which of the eight lessons will be easy for your congregation to learn?
- Which of the eight lessons will it be difficult for your congregation to learn?



John Mahon

For Cascades Presbytery, March 2009.

All photos by author 2007.