

Acts 16-17

The C of E, like most Western Churches, is still coming out of a culture of “membership” rather than discipleship. The difference is significant. When people sign up to be members of something, some are committed to also ‘do’. But most become members because that is what they think is important, or is socially the norm, but that is as far as it goes. The bible never talks about becoming a member of the church - something that you sign up to or pay your dues to belong to. What the bible talks about is discipleship which is all about a life-commitment following Christ and doing the things that he did. Membership tends to be “I” belong - individualistic. Discipleship is “we” follow our Saviour.

The “we” in these chapters starts off with Paul and Silas, grows with the addition of Timothy and grows again with Luke joining in. Later as things progress Paul leaves people behind to carry on the good work when he gets kicked out of a city. Later they meet up again and share God’s work. Guidance is often found in a joint, sharing context and this is also important as God gives guidance to His church through a variety of people where no one person has all the answers.

Read Acts 15.40-16.5

- What was the initial purpose of this trip?
- Why did Paul circumcise Timothy?
- How important do you think it was for Paul to travel with others?

Read Acts 16.6-10

- How does God guide them in this passage?
- In what way is the guidance a shared experience?
- What does the Macedonian actually ask for and how is this interpreted?

Read Acts 16.11-15

- Why do Paul and the others go outside the city?
- Who responds to the message and how is this shown?

Read Acts 16.16-28

- What happens next and why is this so disturbing to Paul?
- What mixture of truth and falsehood do the owners of the girl accuse Paul of?
- Compare v.23 with v.25 - How is this possible?

Read Acts 16.29-40

- In v.30 how much was the question religious or non-religious do you think?
- What do Paul and Silas do?
- Why does Paul demand that the magistrates themselves come and release them?

Read Acts 17.1-9

- What familiar pattern happens in this section?

Read Acts 17.10-15

- What is so different in Berea (at least to start with)?

Read Acts 17.16-34

- What is so very different here in Athens compared to other places for Paul?
- What do you notice about the way that Paul shares the faith?
- Why is talk of the resurrection such a difficult point to the Athenians?

Reflect on how the resurrection can be such a sticking point for people today.