

Acts of Jesus, Lesson 29: A Flexible Ministry

Acts 16:9-12 Their little boat trip here represents the most significant event that has ever happened to western culture.

- It was the first time that the Gospel ever came to the continent of Europe.
 1. Every person in Europe spoke the names of pagan gods: Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hermès, Poséidon, etc. All the gods of paganism. Within 250 years they would be speaking the name of Jesus.
 2. This gospel was destined to shape the governments, the powers, the lives of Europeans for the next almost 2000 years and would be the reason for the founding of our great nation.
 - Often the most significant stuff is the most unnoticed.
 - Often it's the smallest things that have the greatest impact.
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1. And it is seemingly small things that characterize the beginnings of the first church in Europe which require these missionaries to be flexible in their ministry.

- If there was any ministers that you would think would be flexible, you would think it would be Paul and his entourage.
 - But they still give the indication of needing to flex even more:
 1. There is no synagogue: **V. 13**, Paul customarily went to synagogues where people who at least had respect for God and the Bible would be.
 2. There are no men: **VV. 13b-14a**, Paul was used to finding men to put in charge.
 3. There are no locals: **V. 14**, She's from out of town—not the way to start a local ministry is it?
 - Can you feel the reluctance of Paul? **V. 15**.
 4. There are no stable people: **VV. 16-18** Look how reluctant he is here
 - This is not the kind of people you start a church with is it?
 5. Then things go south: **VV. 19-24**, Not been in town long, haven't had a wide reacceptance and now are thrown in the pokey.
 6. One more lesson in flexibility: **VV. 25-33**, A Christian convert people don't get saved there.
 - Things did not turn out the way they expected them to, but was the gospel mission to Europe a success?
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2. Isn't it funny how God seems to do ministry the wrong way sometimes?

- Can you imagine planning a mission trip like that in your wildest dreams?
- The lesson to learn here is one of flexibility...are you flexible? Paul thought he was too.
- One of the biggest problems and one of the biggest hindrances to the gospel occurs when we think we've got ministry figured out.

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- Strangely enough, this usually occurs on the heels of a very successful ministry ... like Paul we settle into a pattern and style and then when things change we have a hard time changing with it.
 - Today if the church does not change its focus and effectively reach out to those with addictions, to those consumed by pornography, to the molested, to the abused, to the demonized, to those who have made a train wreck out of their lives...the church will die because there is essentially no one else to reach.
 - Most Baptist churches have plateaued or are declining because we've got ministry figured.
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We need to be flexible:

1. First thing that will help us do that is to realize that our tendency to not be flexible.
 2. Second thing to do is to keep our eyes open:
 - God is sending people and opportunities our way and we can see and reach them if we will get rid of our preconceived ideas of who they'll be.
 3. Third thing that we need to do is be fearless.
 - Christianity cowers before the monsters of drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual deviancy, etc.
 - These things cower before the truth of Jesus—always have.
 4. We need to put a lot less time into trying to figure out ministry and a lot more time into being available.
 - There just so much planning and praying we can do before it becomes delay on our part.
 - We need to go and take advantage of the opportunities God provides for us.
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