

Baptism for the Successful

Scripture Reading — Acts 16:11-15

When she and the members of her household were bap-tized, she invited us to her home. — Acts 16:15

She was a business owner who peddled to the affluent—high-end shoppers looking for high-end products. She sold cloth dyed with the exquisite purple (crimson) for which her town had become famous. It was very chic, very flattering, very expensive.

Lydia had become prosperous. She was also “a worshiper of God,” meaning she was a Gentile seeking the God of the Bible. She was probably not married, since the story talks about her household, not her husband’s.

Though Lydia may have been moral, successful, and religious, she still needed to be saved. All successful and religious people do. And when the apostle Paul introduced her to the gospel, the good news of Jesus, God’s goodness began to work its way into Lydia’s behavior.

Maybe Lydia felt that Paul had given her the key to the entire Bible, a message too wonderful to ignore: Jesus is the fulfillment of promises made to Abraham and David. He completes the Law of Moses. Even upstanding, moral, and religious people need the gospel. So she took it in. She believed and was baptized as a symbol of her dying and rising in Christ.

Lydia was religious. Now she was free, as her baptism symbolized. She saw—and we see through her—the beauty of the gospel and the beginning of a changed life.

Prayer

Father, part of us wants to be visibly successful, up-standing, moral—and reli-gious. Help us see how des-perately we need your good news. Free us through Jesus, we pray. Amen.

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