

Acts 16 | Philippian Jailer

Acts 16:16-35, 40; 17:1

Based on NLT

Acts 16:16-17

One day as *Paul and Silas* were going down to the place of prayer, *they met a slave girl who was possessed* by an evil spirit**. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. She followed...*Paul and Silas* shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved."

Acts 16:18

This went on day after day until Paul got so *tired of it* that he turned and spoke to the *evil spirit* within her. "I command you in the name of Jesus...to come out of her," he said. And instantly it left her.

Acts 16:19-21

Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. "The whole city is in an uproar because of these *men!*" they shouted. "They are teaching the people to do things that are against *our* customs."

Acts 16:22-24

A mob quickly formed.... *Paul and Silas* were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So *the jailer*...put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

Acts 16:25-28

Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing...to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, and the

prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, "*Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!*"

Acts 16:29-30

...The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down *trembling* before Paul and Silas. *Then* he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31-34

They replied, "Believe* *in...* Jesus and you will be saved, along with *everyone in your* household." Then they *told* the message about Jesus to him and all who lived in his household. That same hour the jailer washed their wounds, and he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized*. *The jailer fed them at his house and they all* rejoiced because they all believed in God.

Acts 16:35, 40; 17:1

The next morning the city officials released Paul and Silas. *When Paul and Silas left the prison, they* returned to the home of Lydia... *There* they met with the group of believers* *that met at Lydia's house* and encouraged them once more...*Then they left to go to another city.*

Why This Story?

This story has been used effectively in both *Purpose* and *Church Formation* themed story sets. This story clearly shows a person asking for salvation and receiving an answer. It shows baptism as a response of obedience. This story also shows the formation of the house church at Lydia's house, and shows Paul's sense of responsibility to encourage and teach the believers there.

Story Crafting

Most High God refers to the position of God, that is, 'the highest God' (indirectly a reference to 'the God in heaven') or 'the God who is higher than all other gods,' that is to say, 'the most important God.' Here the reference would certainly seem to be to 'God who is greater than all others.'

stocks

If your culture does not have an understanding of 'stocks,' you may substitute 'chains' or say that they were locked up so they could not escape. This passage includes information about Paul and his Roman citizenship. It's interesting, but can make the story too lengthy. You may include it if the subject will reoccur in later stories (Paul in Rome, etc.).

Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

The jailer asked how he could be saved, probably both for physical escape and moral and spiritual change. If your language's word for 'saved' implies both physical and spiritual salvation, it's even better. If the word could imply only physical salvation, you can amplify how to be saved to something like, '...to be saved so that God will not punish me for my sins.'

You may amplify the reason they were baptized (to show that they had turned from their sins and turned to God) to reinforce the passage and the teachings you have already shared on baptism.

The term **household** in reference to the jailer probably refers to his family. You may describe this term if needed.

Name of Jesus refers to Jesus' personality and power. You may simply say, *by the power of Jesus*.

Words/Phrases to

Consider

Possessed*

In some cultures, spirit possession is a good thing and is actively sought. If this is true in the culture in which you work, you will need to ensure that the audience understands that this was an evil spirit.

Evil Spirit*

Evil spirits refer to spiritual beings who serve Satan as his agents, being under his authority. These spiritual beings have power to oppress a human being and even take control of him. We know from the Bible that evil spirits were created by God and chose to disobey him. It seems that many South Asian languages do not have a term that can express that adequately. (Their *evil spirit* may refer to a dead person's spirit that 'haunts' people.) Try to choose a word that refers to an independent spirit being that is evil and opposed to God. If there is one, you can also use a neutral word for an independent spirit being and add a qualification like *spirit from Satan*, or *bad/evil spirit*. Be aware that extra explanation might be necessary during the discussion time.

Belief*

This describes man's response to God's promise. It probably implies more than mental agreement, but putting one's faith/confidence in God.

Baptize*

This word is an important term in the Bible and needs to be thought through carefully before attempting to translate. If you have a Bible translation, you may choose to use what the translation uses. If the translation uses the borrowed term (as we also borrow the term from the Greek *baptizo*), but no one understands it, you might want to consider explaining the term. If you are working with long-term believers, you need to see with what term they feel most comfortable. If you need to find a term for some reason, a careful study of the meaning of the concept of 'baptism' is needed. The Greek word means to 'put inside or under water,' or 'to wash in a spiritual sense.' John's baptism was done to show that a person wanted to stop sinning and obey God. In baptism in the church, a person also makes a public demonstration of his commitment to Jesus and his union with him. Romans 6:3-4 indicates that baptism is a symbol of Jesus' burial and resurrection, and our death to our old life and resurrection into our new life with Jesus. This imagery may be very effective in certain cultures. Some ideas for translating this term include:

- 1) to wash someone in water to make him ceremonially clean;
- 2) to wash someone with water as part of their initiation into the religious community;

3) 'bath,' with a qualification such as 'bath of enlightenment' (Tamil) or 'bath of dedication;' If you use some form of 'bath of enlightenment,' you should ensure that your audience understands that this bath signifies a spiritual enlightenment already received through repentance and forgiveness of sins through Jesus.

4) using the word for a custom in the culture that refers to ceremonial washing to make something ritually clean;

5) using the borrowed term with an appositional 'unpacking of meaning,' i.e. 'he was baptized,' 'he was ceremonially washed.'

Keep in mind that in many cultures and religions, people ceremonially wash often to remove sins. You may need to specify that this is a once for all ceremony.

Believers*

After Pentecost, the people who followed Jesus were also called 'believers.' We've used that term in the story set to refer to Jesus' followers after Pentecost and to emphasize the fact that people became followers of Jesus through belief in him.

Intra-Story Cohesion

Use the same words or phrases you have been using throughout the story set for **possessed, evil spirit, belief, baptize, name of Jesus, and believers.**

If you have found that you need to expound upon from what people are being saved, be sure you are consistently using this in each reference to save/saved/saving.

Worldview

Sirs is a polite term of address for men in this biblical culture. Use whatever term is most appropriate in your language.

Story Set Themes

Purpose

Church Formation

Baptism

Persecution

Boldness

Fear