

STORY 6: INVITATION

After Jesus' death and resurrection, many people began to believe in Him, trusting God that Jesus had taken the penalty for their disobedience. As the numbers of Jesus-followers grew, some of them began to travel to other parts of the world to tell about what Jesus had done. One man, named Paul, was a former religious leader who persecuted believers of Jesus until one day God spoke to him and revealed himself to Paul. Paul's life changed completely as he went from someone who threatened Jesus-followers to one who led them. His whole life mission became to share about Jesus with those who had never heard.

One night, Paul had a dream. In his dream, a man from Macedonia called out, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" So Paul and his companions set out for Europe for the first time.

When they arrived in Macedonia they went to Philippi, the main city in that area and, even more importantly, a Roman colony. They stayed there several days.

On one day, they left the city and went down along the river where they had heard about a prayer meeting. They showed up and sat down to talk with some women there. One woman, whose name was Lydia, was a dealer in expensive textiles, and she was known to be a woman who believed in God.

They told Lydia about Jesus and how she could have a relationship with God through trusting in Jesus, and they invited her to believe. As she listened with intensity to what was being said, God gave her a trusting heart—and she believed!

She decided that she wanted to know God personally and she asked to be baptized, which is a tradition that symbolizes new life. After she was baptized, along with everyone in her household, she said in a surge of hospitality, "If you're confident that I'm in this with you and believe in the Master truly, come home with me and be my guests." So the men stayed in her house and taught her more about Jesus.

Before they left the city, Paul and his companions went back to Lydia's house, where they met with other believers and encouraged them. God's message of redemption spread throughout Europe from Lydia's house and beyond.

Within a few years, dozens of churches had been established and many people believed in Jesus for their salvation. As they did, their relationship with God was restored and God made them into "a new creation."

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- **review:** re-tell the story
- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What did you like or not like about the story?
 - What is the setting of the story? What things had to happen before Paul and his companions could meet Lydia?
 - Where do we see God in this story? What can we learn about Him?
 - What do we know about Lydia? What changes about her in the story?
- **application:** live the story
 - In the story, Lydia is invited to believe in Jesus. What is intriguing about this invitation? What might be intimidating about this invitation?
 - This is the part of the story that we find ourselves in today. The invitation has been passed down through generations and is extended to all people, but not everyone accepts it. Why not?
- **notes:**