

Come, Holy Spirit, Come
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Billy Graham has written a book with the title *Holy Spirit*.

In his introduction to the book he shares a story about an Indian who travels on foot over creeks and mountains and finally comes to the ocean, which he has never seen before. The Indian is in awe of the beauty, the vastness, the power of the waves, the abundance of sea life. He runs into the water and joyfully begins swimming and jumping the waves.

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He finds a mason jar on shore and steps into the water to fill the jar. When asked what he was doing he said, I will take this back and show my people the ocean.



Do we keep God the Spirit in a mason jar to look at, acknowledge, but set aside?
What a waste if we do.

We should want to respond to the Spirit as if jumping in the ocean waves with joy. We should breath in the fresh salt air of God to be the salt of the earth and share with others that our joy in the Lord is our strength. All we need to do is share our walk with Jesus. (Acts 7:56). Share with actions and with words our own faith in the Lord. The Holy Spirit is there to do the rest

“The Gospel of the Holy Ghost,”¹ was the first name given to what we call the book “The Acts of the Apostles.” Luke’s main intent in writing his 2nd book was to record the apostles’ testimony and the signs and wonders done in Jesus name. (Acts 4:29–32). Luke wanted to show us that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit was active on planet Earth. There are absolutes in Scripture.

Dictionary.com defines absolute as something that is perfect or complete.

- God is perfect and complete.
God is Trinity, Father, Son, Spirit.
In Genesis 1:(El-o-heem' is the word used for God stated in plural form).
- **PROPHECY IS PERFECT** (there is no changes to be made).
2 Peter 1:20-21 says, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came by holy men of God spoken as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”
- **God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit and the Living Word of God.**
- The Spirit is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7)
and above all others in wisdom and power (Isa. 40:13–14).
Is the creator and sustainer of creation (Job 34:14–15)
the Holy Spirit is able to direct nature itself in judgment upon the nations (Isa. 34:16).
(Ps. 143:10).
The Holy Spirit is God’s very presence and power.

¹ Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton’s Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Scripture, the Living Word of God often will speak to us exactly where we are at when we take the time to read, listen and seek the Holy Spirit's input. That is why we might experience a verse that seems to just jump out at us and it will be just exactly what we needed to read.

Such times are the work of the Spirit.

When we have hearts seeking after God, God answers.

However,.....

The Living Word of God is interpreted partly by one's perspective. How we see or view certain things affects our interpretation and application of the Biblical stories.

Perhaps you have seen this before?

Slide on two women:



This slide of two women is well known. Do you see a young woman, an old woman or can you see both women?

Where we are, physically, emotionally, mentally, can affect our interpretation of a Bible story. Our understanding of God's Word is very important. Yet each one of us may have a slightly different perspective when we apply a Bible story to our life. God's Word speaks to each of us as individuals and guides us along our way (Rom. 8:26–27).

A 6-foot man in a crowd sees people heads, hats, hair, faces and shoulders. a 4-foot child beside the 6-foot man sees hands, gloves, purses, and the mid-section of people. A smaller child standing with the tall man might see legs, feet and if something has dropped on the floor. If the small child is held in the man's arms he might see some of the man's view. All three are seeing the same people at the same time, yet they see the same thing differently.

When there's a traffic accident, police ask for witnesses to come forward to describe what happened. They like to have as many witness statements as possible so that they can build up enough evidence to give them a broader, more realistic version of events. In a traffic accident, there will be many different perspectives. The driver of one car will have one view, another driver or a passenger will have yet another view. Each onlooker who witnessed the accident will have a slightly different perspective also.

You know,

It's the same principle in life- each situation, event, conversation, means something different to all those involved. We give different meanings, according to our belief systems, and how we are affected by the event.

Do you see two faces or a wine glass?



Our knowledge of there being different perspectives needs to be used as a guide to help us to understand why someone else just might see the same thing differently. We

may choose to look at a story historically, culturally, for ourselves or for someone else. We may do a quick overview or we may pick each sentence apart- word by word. We may think it is a nice story, we may not see God working in the story, or we may. We may be able to apply the story to ourselves and make a change in our lives.

The Holy Spirit speaks to each one of us uniquely each and every time we read or hear the Word of God and in prayer. That is why you may read a familiar Bible story and say, "I never saw it that way before."

There are several perspectives that can be taken when we look at the Acts 16 Scripture for today. It is a powerful story of a woman named Lydia, told in 3 short verses: Acts 16:14-15, 40, although other NT verses written by Paul most likely refer to Lydia (Philippians).

The first way we might view Acts 16: 14-15 would be:

I. The Conversion of Lydia. Lydia, was Paul's first European convert. Scripture says, "*One woman, Lydia, who was from*

1. *Thyatira.*
2. *a dealer in expensive textiles,*
3. *known to be a God-fearing woman.*
4. *She listened with intensity to what was being said,*
5. *God gave her a trusting heart—and she believed in Jesus!*
6. *As did her whole household.*

II. A Bird's Eye View is my favorite way to look at the story of Lydia, or an even better way to say it, I think might be to call it a Google Earth view of Acts 16. It is a view from above. This view pulls up and takes in the work of the Holy Spirit, in regard to this particular story (about Lydia), within the entire Scriptures. When we look from above we see that The Holy Spirit has woven the story of God from Genesis to Revelation. (Nehemiah 9:20, 30).

The story of Lydia, a non-Jew, from *Thyatira known to be a God-fearing woman* compares with a story in the Old Testament with amazing similarities. It is the book of Ruth, about a young, widowed Moabite woman, a non-Jew who told her Jewish Mother-in-law, "Your people will be my people and your God my God. "The fact that both stories, the story of Lydia and the story of Ruth are centered around non-Jewish women with faith in the One True God is extremely meaningful.

Ruth is presented as a childless widow, the model daughter-in-law who loves God. She sets an example of God's provision for her, God's chosen people, for his plan of prophecy and for all people. I wish we had time to really delve into the story of Ruth, but for our purposes today we will notice Ruth opens the door for Gentiles (those outside the Jewish faith) to become a part of or an insider with those who have faith in the one true God.

Centuries after Ruth from the Old Testament, Lydia is also presented as one who loves God. Neither woman who lived centuries apart were Jewish. Lydia was a smart woman, a business woman. Lydia sold purple cloth, it was very expensive cloth made from a juice found in minute quantities in shellfish. It took thousands of crushed shellfish to make a yard or two of purple cloth. Thus, the purple cloth was very expensive. To have purple cloth at the time was a statement of status, wealth and power. A **status symbol**

is a perceived visible, external physical thing that gives a rating of one's social position. Many luxury goods are often considered status symbols. Purple cloth was the Gucci handbag, the Kate Spade dress, the Ray Ban sunglasses or the Rolex watch of Roman times.

But purple wasn't just an indicator of wealth. Purple was a symbol of political power. The more important you were as a Roman senator, the more purple decoration you had on your toga. The emperor, and only the emperor, would wear a toga made entirely of purple cloth. Purple was the color of the Roman elite. And Lydia was the supplier of the purple cloth. Lydia was a well-known, wealthy woman. Perhaps, somewhat like our own generous Melinda Gates????

Lydia offered her home as a place for Paul and his companions to rest and recharge. She opened her home as a place where Paul shared the gospel with others. Lydia used her home as the first church in Europe.

Lydia is an excellent example and model to follow in regard to hospitality, which is yet another perspective we can take to view Acts 16.

The word hospitality is kin of "hospital."

We rarely put the words hospital and hospitality together because in our culture the mental images they generate are so different. But a hospital is a place away from your home that is designed to bring healing and wholeness. Hospitality is about allowing your home and your presence to bring emotional, mental, and spiritual healing to others.

The story of Lydia indeed gave us a true example of Godly hospitality.

Hospitality is showing care and concern for others. Hospitality is being kind and thoughtful of others. Hospitality often takes persuasion with several invitations and extra effort because you are helping people. Hospitality is seeing a need and addressing the need. Sometimes you take hospitality to others, instead of inviting folks home. A meal when they are sick, a brown bag lunch, or picnic dinner. Just this week Amal Jones gathered some women who I wanted to get to know better and we met at her home for brunch. It was a gift to me and I am most grateful. Rose Hill is a church that does hospitality well.

I do volunteer work in senior living communities. As I have ministered in the homes and seen the needs and the desires of the very lonely older folks I sought God's help in prayer. I pondered for days, how the need could be met. Because it is a great need.

Older folks have said to me, "I believe in God, but I left the church when I left home as an adult. I always planned to get back to church, but now I live here and I can't get out anywhere" and I have heard "I quit going to church, I sure wish I could go back now. There is so much I don't know about God."

And I have been asked, "Is there really a Heaven?" All such questions opened the door to share the Gospel. The idea of using THE STORY came to my mind. It is so easy to present, most anyone could do so. There is little prep time and it has a big impact. My answer to all the questions is, "Lets listen to God's Word and maybe your question will be answered for you."

"THE STORY" is the NIV Bible written as a novel. It is a dramatic, multiple voices, professional narration with music and sound effects that bring to life the Biblical story. I shared my idea of making kits with rolling suit cases to take to senior living facilities and someone offered to finance 5 kits! This is one. (Put hand on suitcase).

Roy and Linda McIntosh are wheeling a suitcase and a few extra books to the Kirkland Brookdale every Thursday for a 4:PM gathering of about 11 people. I did so at Maple Leaf on Lake City Way.

What we are offering is just the Word of God. The thing is,

The Holy Spirit is alive in hearts that seek after God.

“For the word of God is living and active.

Sharper than any double-edged sword, it pierces even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

God is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

God communicates with us in both the OT and NT with stories.

When comparing our Scriptures about Ruth in the OT with Ruth in the NT we can see the Bible is one continuous story about God. Story after story God communicates with us in both the OT and NT.

The stories of both Ruth and Lydia go above and beyond showing an example of true gratitude for the care given to the women and the guidance they were shown to find their faith in God.

Both stories show there is an open the door for ALL (those outside the Jewish faith) to become a part of or an insider with those who have faith in the one true God.

The little book of Ruth is one of the most instructive in the Old Testament concerning the future work of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus² in the New Testament. The few lines in Acts about Lydia show us the future work of the Messiah as it begins with Paul.

Both stories go beyond national barriers; to extol human kindness and friendship that exceed any reasonable requirement of duty. Both are stories of love. God’s love.

Ruth and Lydia show us that God’s purposes unfold through the faithfulness of His people, in God’s time.

We see that human decisions and actions play a significant role and God’s will is sometimes accomplished by common people, even outside of a faith circle. .³

God does that today also. The Holy Spirit today works in peoples hearts and when they hear the Word of God, the gospel that explains that Jesus is the savior, they believe.

But people who want to hear the Word of God need to hear the Word of God.

Often the Word of God needs to be taken and shared with those waiting to know God.

Lydia attended a prayer meeting. Her heart open to God.

Lydia listened to Paul say, as most Jewish Rabbi’s would say, both in times of Ruth in the OT and at the time of Lydia and even today.

“Hear, O, Hear Israel, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

Lydia also heard Paul say something few had heard.

² Archer, G., Jr. (1994). *A survey of Old Testament introduction* (3rd. ed., pp. 308–309). Chicago: Moody Press.

³ Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (pp. 104–105). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers. Yancy

Paul said, "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son.

And this is why:

by believing in Jesus, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.

God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. Jesus came to help, to put the world right again.

Anyone who trusts in Jesus, God's Son, is acquitted of their sin. (John 3:16-19).

Paul also preached that Jesus, had been murdered, but that Jesus had risen from the dead. Jesus was the Messiah who had come to save God's people.

Lydia's heart had been prepared by the Holy Spirit and although she did not fully understand everything Paul said, she knew in her heart that God was calling to her so she believed. She believed in Jesus!

The Holy Spirit renews people and gives new believers, a new spirit and the Spirit always dwells within those who believe in Jesus.

You and I who believe in Jesus have dwelling within us the Holy Spirit.

God's work on Earth is accomplished through Holy Spirit empowered believers. "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord" (Zech. 4:6).

When we regularly read, apply to our lives and sing both the Old Testament and NT we're connecting personally to our living God who created all things. When we share our living God with others we are spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Who was it that shared with you in such a way about Jesus that you believed? Aren't you grateful that they inspired you to believe in Jesus? Have you ever expressed your gratefulness to them? When have you expressed your faith in Jesus to someone to help them believe in Jesus?

Over a century ago in Ireland Dwight L. Moody heard said, "The world has yet to see what God will do with someone fully committed to God.

Moody's response was, "By the Holy Spirit in me, I'll be fully committed to God. He went on to influence two continents and Billy Graham.

The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity. He is fully God. He is eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, has a will, and can speak. He is alive. He is a person. He is not particularly visible in the Bible because His ministry is to bear witness of Jesus (John 15:26).

The Holy Spirit dwells in us and empowers us to do the will of God.

Are you able and willing to do God's will?

Amen