

# Lessons from Lydia

*A Women's Day Program by Susan J. Jantzen*  
*From Women Together: Ideas for Groups, vol. 1*

## Advance Preparation

On a table which will serve as a worship center, drape a flowing purple cloth. Prior to each reading, add a symbol to the table: a white pillar candle, representing worship; a clear round glass globe (the kind in which flowers are suspended; check craft stores or use a vase) with water inside, representing a peaceful spirit; and a wet lump of clay, representing malleability. You will need two worship leaders, a song leader, and perhaps a soloist. Ask three group members to read the scripture.

## Introduction

**Leader 1:** In this time of worship our thoughts will center on Lydia, the seller of purple who met with other women to pray, who led women in spiritual nurture, and who extended her home for the work of God's kingdom. This sounds like so many women in our churches. May you be strengthened by these images. In our service, the same scripture, Acts 16:11-15, will be read three times. See what new thing strikes you after each reading. After a short dialogue, we will pause for a few minutes of reflection and prayer. I invite you to relax in the silence and open your heart to God's presence.

Sing HWB 117 "Fairest Lord Jesus" or 121 "Holy God, we praise thy name." Alternatively, have a soloist sing HWB 104 "Of the Father's love begotten."

## Lydia the Worshiper

Read Acts 16:11-15.

**Leader 2:** We first meet Lydia as part of a group of women who met together and worshipped. I can't think of many places in the Bible where this image of women worshipping together occurs. But here it is. And here we are.

**Leader 1:** For many of us in this room, worshipping with women is a significant part of our Christian walk.

**Leader 2:** Worship itself is central to faith.

**Leader 1:** Before I knew all the questions I would have of God, I worshiped.

**Leader 2:** Then, even as my list of questions grew, but before I knew all the answers, I worshiped.

**Leader 1:** I worship to complete my human experience. I worship because I know it brings a new factor into my human life, into my life as a woman.

**Leader 2:** More accurately I would say that I worship because I believe that God is already present in every facet of living, and I want to acknowledge that more and more, becoming more and more aware of what God's presence means. This is one of the most special gifts of worship.

**Leader 1:** I am part of a world that God has created and keeps watching over. God does not wish for me to carry out *all* of God's hopes. I am a part.

**Leader 2:** I can share what I do with God.

**Leader 1:** I find joy in walking with a God who keeps growing and changing this world. Along with Lydia, I can receive strength from my relationship with this renewing God.

Pause for a time of quiet reflection and prayer.

## Lydia the Listener

Read Acts 16:11-15.

**Leader 1:** Lydia had placed her whole heart with God. Being in the trade world, she was familiar with human behavior. She also must have been familiar with the pressures of human interaction. She had some money; perhaps she was not wealthy, but she was not poor.

**Leader 2:** That sounds like me. And I am glad to hear about a woman who had some money, because that is a part of my life, too.

**Leader 1:** Even with her money and her experience in business and with people, Lydia worshiped God.

**Leader 2:** To me this Acts passage suggests that Lydia had peace in God. Lydia, who knows the ways of the world, knows her anchor.

**Leader 1:** One of the measures of having worshiped is a release which comes, a lessening of tension, a renewed spirit, a feeling that we can go on now.

**Leader 2:** Having some peace within enables us to listen. It is this kind of spirit, a spirit of peace, that can hear another person in need, a loving correction, or another person with a message for us, a new idea.

**Leader 1:** To be sure, the message of Jesus' appearance on earth would take a ready, trusting listener. A heart at peace in God. Lydia, like Mary and others in the Bible, was ready to hear this. The Lord renewed her in worship, the Lord opened her heart to listen, and Lydia allowed that to happen.

Pause for a time of quiet reflection and prayer.

## Lydia the Receiver

Read Acts 16:11-15.

**Leader 1:** One of the overall themes of Acts is the activity of the Holy Spirit. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us that anyone in Christ has become a new creation. This is what happened to Lydia as she listened and received the message that Paul and his friends have to share. Lydia received a new life in Christ and was baptized. Lydia allowed herself to be changed.

**Leader 2:** The Holy Spirit and baptism are familiar facets of my Christian walk. But how I have to keep learning about being open to receiving from God!

**Leader 1:** I know that I am incomplete without God, and that is one reason why I worship. I know that I desire peace within, both for myself and for those with whom I relate, so that I can be a listener. Yet, my ability to receive from God remains a crucial link in this chain of new life and hope. I will probably learn more and more about receiving from God all my life.

**Leader 2:** When I think back to my baptism, I realize that I now know more than I did then about the responsibilities and commitments that come with that act of faith.

**Leader 1:** But I also know more about the fullness of God's love for me than I did then.

**Leader 2:** I want that journey to continue—as I am in prayer, when I take part in communion, as I live more fully into my baptism in the name of Christ.

**Leader 1:** I am grateful that Lydia received baptism. She encourages me to trust God with my whole heart, to worship, to receive new insights. Lydia opened her heart to listen and she responded by receiving. I want to do the same.

Pause for a time of quiet reflection and prayer. Then sing 356 "Breathe on me, breath of God." As a closing prayer, read in unison HWB 737 or 738.