Lydia

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: The Lord opens hearts. Hearing God's Word with an open heart leads to obeying it right away and to opening our lives to God's people.
Bible passage: Acts 16:9–15 and 16:40. Students read them out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." *Acts 16:14 (KJV)* and "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." *Romans 10:17 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Acts 16 and Romans 10:17. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a few verses each.

1. Opening game: Hearing or Listening? (5–10 minutes)

Students pair up. One partner talks for 30 seconds about their week. The other partner then tells back three details. Switch. Then do it again, but this time the listener looks around the room and doesn't make eye contact. Ask: *What was the difference? Is it possible to hear words without really listening?* Say: "Lydia heard Paul, but the Bible says something more happened: the Lord opened her heart, so she really listened."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Acts 16:9–15. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **assuredly gathering** (16:10): being sure, putting it all together
- **loosing from Troas** (16:11): sailing away from Troas; **a straight course**: sailing straight there
- **chief city** (16:12): most important city; **colony**: a city of Roman people living far from Rome
- **wont** (16:13): usual; **resorted thither**: came there
- **a seller of purple** (16:14): her work was selling purple; **attended unto**: listened carefully to
- **household** (16:15): the people of her house; **besought**: begged
- **judged me to be faithful** (16:15): saw that I truly believe; **abide**: stay; **constrained**: urged until they came

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Tell the middle part in your own words: After this, Paul and Silas were beaten and put in prison in Philippi (Acts 16:16–24). At midnight they prayed and sang praises unto God (16:25). God sent a great earthquake, and the keeper of the prison was baptized, he and all his, straightway, which means right away (16:26–33). When it was day, the magistrates (the rulers of the city) sent word to let them go (16:35–36).

Read out loud: Acts 16:40. When they came out, they went to the house of Lydia, saw the **brethren** (the believers), **comforted** them (encouraged them), and **departed** (left).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Lydia "worshipped God" before she ever met Paul (16:14). Why did she still need to hear the gospel (16:10)?
2. "Whose heart the Lord opened" (16:14). Who did the opening? What part did Lydia have (she came to prayer, she listened, she obeyed)?
3. Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing the word of God. Where do you hear God's Word each week? How can you listen better?
4. Lydia was baptized once the Lord opened her heart (16:14–15), and the keeper of the prison was baptized "straightway" (16:33). What do these stories teach about putting off obeying God?
5. Lydia said, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord" (16:15). How did she show her faith with what she did?
6. Paul and Silas went straight to Lydia's house after prison (16:40). What would it look like for your home to be a place that welcomes and comforts God's people?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words in Romans 10:17: **cometh** means comes. Faith comes when we hear, and what we hear is the word of God.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Acts 16:14 this week; keep working on Romans 10:17 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Lydia heard the gospel, the Lord opened her heart, and she was baptized (Acts 16:14–15). Acts 16:15 does not say how she was baptized, but Peter told everyone how to obey the gospel in Acts 2:38. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Is there something God has been saying to me that I have been putting off?
2. What would it look like to listen to God's Word with an open heart this week?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to open your heart and help you obey Him right away.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: before you read your Bible or hear preaching, pray, "Lord, open my heart." Then do one thing to welcome or encourage someone at church.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Your Word. Open our hearts like You opened Lydia's heart, so we listen and obey without putting it off. Make our homes places that welcome and comfort Your people. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks who was in Lydia's household: the Bible says "her household" (Acts 16:15) and does not tell us who they were, so we don't guess.

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