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## WARM UP

Have you ever had very high expectations of something, but it didn't work out the way you'd hoped? What was it? Why weren't your expectations met?

## WORD

Read **Acts 16:8-34**

Paul receives a vision of a Macedonian man calling out to come and help them in Macedonia. Paul understands that this is a vision from God and takes up the challenge to head to Macedonia, only to find himself facing trials almost immediately after encountering a fortune teller.

## NOTES

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## 1 Change of Fortune

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<sup>16</sup>As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. <sup>17</sup>She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." <sup>18</sup>And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. <sup>19</sup>But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

**Acts 16:16-19** (ESV)

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As Paul and Silas are on their way to fulfil the call God had given them towards Macedonia, they immediately encounter a fortune teller who is under demonic spiritual oppression. She pursues them and, Paul, in his annoyed state, casts the demon out of her. This would be great news in most cases, but unfortunately it has them encountering her "owners", who knew they couldn't make income from her anymore. They had Paul and Silas arrested and thrown into prison.

- Have you ever done something good to help others, only to be misinterpreted, and have your good deeds backfire on you? If not, have you seen this happen to someone else? What happened?
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## 2 Through Thick and Thicker

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<sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. <sup>23</sup>And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. <sup>24</sup>Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup>About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and

*the prisoners were listening to them, <sup>26</sup>and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened.*

**Acts 16:22-26** (ESV)

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Imagine the anguish - after doing God's will in walking in His calling and delivering the fortune teller from her demonic torment, Paul and Silas are beaten by a crowd with rods and blows. Yet upon being thrown in jail, they pray and praise God, only to see God start an earthquake and have the prison foundations shaken and the doors open. Despite your obedience and your faithfulness in walking with God, there will be times of trial and accusation. We can learn from Paul and Silas that there is a resilience God wants us to have in praising Him through anything we may be facing. He is wanting to deliver us by shaking the spiritual foundations of prisons we may be held captive in.

- Are there areas of your spiritual life where you feel you may have been trapped in a prison (habits, repetitive patterns of sin, sinful thoughts), but you're believing God will break you out of by completely shattering old foundations that you may have laid in your life? Would you be willing to let God do that now?
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### PRAYER

- Pray for God's resilience through trials.
- Pray for grace when you are misunderstood and that there will be no room for bitterness to take root in your heart.
- Pray for those who are imprisoned and persecuted around the world as they represent Christ in closed nations.