



# MEETING JESUS

*How Jesus' interactions with  
women still challenge us today*

**4 BIBLE STUDIES | LEADER'S GUIDE**



**AFRICA**  
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# Introduction

The pages of the Gospels and Acts hold the stories of many women, some named, some unnamed, who have interactions with Jesus that change their lives and the lives of the people around them. We see Jesus, over and over again, taking the time to know and see each individual, no matter what their personal circumstances and standing in society. He listens to them, takes time for them, and values their personal responsibility and their standing with God. He calls them to follow him, and allows them to play significant roles in his life and ministry in a way that must have seemed quite counter-cultural. And when everyone has given up on him because he doesn't look like the kind of Messiah that they were expecting, it is these women who, because of how Jesus has treated them, respected them, noticed and healed them, have a deeper understanding of Jesus' identity and are loyal still at the cross and at the tomb. This means that they are primary witnesses for some of the most poignant and pivotal moments of the gospel narrative, and therefore some of the first people to share that good news with others.

What can we all learn from the unique experiences of women - be they women in the Gospels or those who are encountering Jesus across Africa today? What insights can we gain from putting ourselves in their shoes? What did Jesus' radical upside-down gospel kingdom mean for them personally and how does it affect us? Standing on the edges of society and often marginalised, how might they have felt upon hearing the good news for the first time? How might this inform or change the way that we view, and do, mission?



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# Thirst quenched in Jesus

## *The woman at the well and Rosina Ferdinand*

### Introduction

There were many things dividing Jesus and the woman at the well. And yet, Jesus chooses to connect with her in a deep and profound way, even though by doing so he is breaking several Jewish taboos. Firstly, it was frowned upon for Jews to talk to a woman out and about, secondly Jews did not associate with Samaritans, and thirdly drinking from her water jar would have made him ceremonially unclean. But Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well is longer than any other conversation recorded in the Gospels. He has a deep interaction with her about personal, political and theological matters - the nature of true worship. As a result of this conversation, she is the first person Jesus openly reveals his true identity as the Messiah to in the Gospel of John, and the first person to go away and tell others about him. Because of her testimony, many people became believers.

✓ **Read John 4:1-30 and 39-42.**

### **Questions for discussion:**

1. Imagine you are one of the disciples. What might you be thinking or feeling upon returning to find Jesus talking to the woman at the well?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose to reveal himself as the Messiah for the first time so clearly to this woman who would, on several counts, have been viewed as an 'outsider'?
3. What might the news that Jesus shared with her mean to the woman, given what we know of her?
4. How does the woman at the well respond to Jesus' news? Are there any differences in how other people around him responded to him?
5. Who might be the modern day equivalent to a Samaritan woman? How would you feel about that person receiving a powerful revelation of Jesus?
6. How can we follow Jesus' example and show his love and welcome to those on the margins of our society?



### **Being a Samaritan...**

After Solomon died and the kingdom of Israel was divided, the northern kingdom was annexed by the Assyrians who then settled in the area. The Jewish people were meant to be set apart, living differently and distinctively to point people to God but instead the Jews in the northern kingdom intermarried with the Assyrians and became known as Samaritans. As such the Jews in the southern kingdom who had remained pure viewed them as having lost their racial and religious standing. This divide was only increased when the Samaritans built their own temple around 400BC.

## Meet Rosina

Rosina Ferdinand grew up in the traditional Sakalava way — farming and fishing in an island village on Nosy Be off the north coast of Madagascar, believing in cultural taboos and engaging in ancestral worship. But even at a young age she suspected that something was missing in her life and was searching for the truth. At high school she heard the gospel for the first time, and she knew that Jesus was the Saviour, and that she could trust him.

Thinking about how far away from God she had been, and how she had been trapped by the fear of taboos and unappeased ancestors, knowing that her whole community still lived in that bondage weighed heavily on her heart. “I did have the desire to come back to Nosy Be, so that they would be freed and know salvation,” she says, “but I did not have the courage. I dreamt of going back to my village and being part of the family there, living there with them so that through me they may see Jesus and see the gospel. That was my dream, but I didn’t know where to start or how to do it.”

God sent Rosina to All Nations Christian College in the UK. While there, a local church who had a prayer focus on the Sakalava people invited her to visit, and then promised to support her when she returned to minister to her people.

Rosina has served as an AIM missionary on Nosy Be for the last eight years. She now disciples the newest believers at the Sakalava church plant. One of those young men, the leader of the worship band, recently expressed a desire to become a pastor. “This is not something I could have done by myself,” she says. She is grateful for the people who have been praying for her and her ministry among the Sakalava people.

“I just wanted to be with my people,” Rosina explains, “sitting down in the village, being with them so maybe they would see the transformation in my life and see that there is something magnificent in that, and they would know Jesus as well. God loves my people. He wants to raise up Sakalava people to believe in him and to be set free from the bondage of the fear of the ancestors. It is quite amazing to me that the Lord put me right back in the middle of my people.”

If you would like to read a full version of Rosina’s story, you can visit: [eu.aimint.org/going-back/](https://eu.aimint.org/going-back/)



### **Questions for discussion:**

1. What aspects of Rosina’s story stand out to you the most?
2. What might some of the benefits of having people share the gospel within their own cultures be? What could be some of the challenges?

3. Why might it be important for us to encourage Africans to be taking the lead in mission in Africa?
4. Think about the way that your church currently supports mission. How might we (as churches or as individuals) play a role in supporting African missionaries like Rosina?
5. Think about the way that both the woman at the well and Rosina might explain their experience of Jesus and the gospel to their community, family and friends. What might be similar? What might be different?
6. How might you explain your experience of Jesus and the gospel to those around you in your community, friends or family?

# Extravagantly committed to Christ

## *Mary of Bethany and Sophie*

### Introduction

The stories of Jesus being anointed with perfume appear in all of the Gospels and the event is clearly significant to the Gospel writers. It is unclear how many different events the four accounts relate to, but it is likely to have been at least two, one occurring earlier on in Jesus' ministry (the account in Luke), and one just before his death. We'll be looking at the later event in this study. Through her actions, the woman with the perfume (named in John's account as Mary of Bethany, sister of Lazarus) was the first follower of Christ to acknowledge what Jesus had been saying about his impending death. Whether or not Mary was fully aware of the deep meaning behind her actions, she would have known the symbolism associated with it - of anointing with oil being associated with the idea of kingship and being set apart for a specific task, and the association between burial and perfumed oil. Her actions in this moment reflect those traditionally played by a prophet or a priest - something that presumably was quite obvious to the onlookers at the time.

✓ Read Matthew 26:1-2 and 6-13, and John 12:1-11.

### Questions for discussion:

1. In the context of Matthew 26:1-2, how does Mary's reaction differ from those of Jesus' disciples? For accounts of other times Jesus talked about the fact that he would die, see Matthew 16:22, Mark 9:30-37, and Mark 10:32-45.
2. As we read the Gospels, we can see that at times the disciples couldn't make sense of what Jesus was saying. Why do you think Mary had this particular insight into his calling?
3. At the end of the passage in Matthew Jesus says that this story will be told whenever the gospel is told - why might this moment be so significant in the gospel story?
4. The jar of perfume that the woman poured out was no small token - it would have been worth a year's wages. What might have motivated her to make such an extravagant gesture?
5. It might be helpful to spend some time thinking about some of the things that God has done for you over the course of your life. How might you choose to pour out your love and worship for Jesus in response to what he has done for you?



### Commentary on Mary's insight

**From Bible Speaks Today commentary on John by Bruce Milne:** "Mary shows a perceptive heart. Although the full significance of her action is possibly hidden from her, it was 'right' because she perceived something of the mind of Jesus. Despite the festive nature of the occasion Mary senses his true spirit, and in her own soul the chill of the dark waters in which Jesus must soon be immersed (Luke 12:50). The secret of Mary's insight is an open one. She 'sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said' (Luke 10:39). Here is the path to the heart of Jesus, open to all disciples. As we make it a priority to spend time at Jesus' feet listening to his Word (and it needs the whole Bible to interpret his Word) we begin to attune with Jesus' mind and discern how, where, and in what ways we can serve him."

## Sophie's Story

Sophie\* was brought up in a Muslim home on one of the islands in the Indian Ocean but was having some serious doubts. Then one night she dreamed she was in a deep pit. It was dark, and she couldn't get herself out. She saw Jesus looking down into the pit. He called her name, reached down and pulled her out. She decided to find out more about her rescuer and has eagerly soaked up and stuck to truth even in the midst of persecution. Her faith is simple yet deep.

When she first accepted Christ, she only felt responsible for herself and her own decision. This broadened to a desire to share with her family, and later, her wider community, after seeing her neighbour in a dream, in the middle of the ocean, clinging to a rope which she believed would bring her to paradise. Sophie could see that no one was holding the other end to pull her to safety – she was just floating helplessly, clutching a useless rope.

Shortly after reading about Paul's persecution in Acts, Sophie received a call to say the police were coming to arrest her. She boldly asked the police officer if she was considered dangerous enough to be locked up without a trial. The officer agreed to a court hearing. She came to us and said, "If I go to prison, I go to prison, but I want a chance like Paul to speak. God will be with me and give me the words." In the end her accusers never showed up and her case was dismissed.

Then, just before Christmas she had another dream. She saw a man in bright white who asked her what path she was following. She responded with, "What do you want me to do?" He gave her a holy book and then took her by the hand to where all her extended family were gathered. He then told her to stand in the middle of them and read what he had given her. It was the story of Jonah, and as she read it aloud she understood and was able to explain the parallel to Jesus. Afterwards she fell to her knees pleading, crying, begging her family to accept the truth and Jesus who would save them. At this point she woke up. But she knew she was being asked to share the words she had been given with her family.

For the last few years she has invited her family to eat a Christmas meal with her. This year, after everyone finished eating, she shared the gospel. It was a big step and she was scared, but she knew she needed to obey. She said it was met with mixed reactions – some disagreed but others listened with interest.

*\* For security reasons, this is not her real name or photo.*



For more of Sophie's story, you can visit: [eu.aimint.org/sophienov2020/](https://eu.aimint.org/sophienov2020/) and [eu.aimint.org/directed-by-dreams/](https://eu.aimint.org/directed-by-dreams/)



**Questions for discussion:**

1. Mary and Sophie have both shown their total commitment to Jesus in quite different ways in their own individual times and settings, and both have been willing to sacrifice much. What might that kind of commitment look like for you in your particular context and situation?
2. Both Mary and Sophie have also faced opposition in different ways - whether that be facing criticism for ignoring the social and cultural norms of the day, or facing the risk of being imprisoned. What kind of oppositions do you face, and how might they discourage or prevent you from being willing to make extravagant sacrifices for Jesus?
3. As Mary spent time with Jesus she grew to understand more about his ministry, and we can see the same too in Sophie's life as the Holy Spirit changed her attitude about sharing the gospel. In your own life can you look back and see how God has been changing you?

# Serving Jesus through every season

## *Mary Magdalene and Queen Basupi*

### Introduction

One of at least six different Marys who followed Jesus (she has often been confused with other Marys and also with the 'sinful woman' in Luke 7), Mary Magdalene's name is mentioned 12 times in the Gospels, more than most of the apostles. She is often mentioned by Luke in the same context as the Twelve. She was most likely from Magdala, an affluent town, so could well have had significant wealth. This would explain how she had the means to be one of the women who supported Jesus and his ministry in a material way. Mary was with Jesus throughout his ministry, his death, and then was the first person who he appeared to after the resurrection. He gave her instructions to go back and tell the disciples the news of the resurrection.

✓ **Read Luke 8:1-3 and Matthew 28:1-10.**

### ***Questions for discussion:***

1. What is Mary's response to being healed by Jesus?
2. God could have provided practically for Jesus' ministry in many ways, but he used women like Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna. Why might he have chosen this?
3. What might Mary's motivations be in supporting Jesus and his mission in this way? How else is she involved in his ministry?
4. In the fear filled time of Jesus' death, Mary is still present, even though she must have been confused or disillusioned. Why might she and the other women have returned to the tomb after the Sabbath with spices to anoint Jesus' body?
5. Mary is one of the first people to hear – and be told to go and share – the gospel story of Jesus' resurrection. In a society where a woman's word was not given credibility (a woman was not allowed to bear witness in a court of law at the time), why might Jesus have chosen Mary Magdalene to be one of the first people to encounter him in his resurrection?
6. Mary didn't just give Jesus money and then disengage from his ministry, she travelled with Jesus and continued listening, learning, serving, and supporting. Are we sometimes tempted to give to a good cause and then mentally tick it off?
7. In times of doubt and crisis how have you responded to Jesus? What can we learn from Mary's example?

## Meet Queen Basupi

“Being a woman in mission has been an advantage for me, as many of the communities I have worked in perceive females as warm, loving and not necessarily as a threat. I have had unique opportunities to share this message of Christ, especially with other women. When I lived in a community among a least-reached group in Malawi, women could talk and visit other women not related to them, but not men. I had access to women whom I would eventually share the stories of the Bible with. I could spend time with their children. This opened up opportunities to present the gospel in ordinary conversations.

The disadvantage though, is that in some communities, a woman is seen to be physically, emotionally and spiritually weak, which makes her vulnerable and sometimes taken advantage of. Her word doesn't carry much weight so women do not necessarily have a 'voice'.

Over the years I have had different roles in different seasons. In seasons like this where our children are young, travel and other commitments are limited. The most important thing is to understand the season, embrace it and enjoy it. There are wonderful things in each season. At the moment we are adjusting to a new location. I am working part time at the AIM Southern Region office, carefully choosing what to commit to and what to refrain from. I'm building friendships with the local ladies, one who has braided my hair and the other who sells fruit in our community. The opportunities may look different but in every season there is a life I can touch. The women who followed Jesus, followed until the end, that's my encouragement. To follow in every season. To follow until the end.”



If you would like to read Queen Basupi's full article, you can visit: [eu.aimint.org/in-every-season](https://eu.aimint.org/in-every-season)

### ***Questions for discussion:***

1. What might involvement in mission in different seasons or different life stages look like?
2. What season are you in at the moment?
3. What are some of our motivations in supporting mission and ministries?
4. What different opportunities do you have in the position that you are in – male, female, life experience, background etc? How are you using those to serve Jesus?
5. Are there any ways that you feel you might be being called to use those positions in new ways?

# Part of the local body

## *Lydia of Thyatira and Myriam*

### Introduction

Lydia was from Thyatira, a town known for its guilds of craftsmen, especially that of the production and sale of purple dye. She was most likely a member of the guild, so we can assume she had some level of wealth, and had established her business in Philippi. She was already a Gentile follower of the Jewish God, but after meeting Paul and Silas, she became the first convert to Christianity in the European continent, followed by her household. The very fact that Paul and Silas go to Philippi is down to God's specific guiding (see Paul's vision of the man of Macedonia in Acts 16:6-10), so this seems to be a significant and pivotal meeting.

Paul and Silas may have stayed with her for several weeks, during which time she will have been able to learn from them, both theologically and pastorally. She played an important role in what was most likely the first church in Philippi, which met in her house. The fact that we know her name, when others in Philippi are not named (like the jailor or the slave girl, for instance) suggests that she became a prominent person in the church at Philippi.

✓ **Read Acts 16:13-15 and Acts 16:40.**

### ***Questions for discussion:***

1. As Lydia was a Gentile follower of the Jewish God, it suggests that she had been wrestling with the big questions of life and was looking for answers. How might the people we live life alongside indicate they are searching for truth? Have you encountered people who are searching?
2. In what ways did Lydia respond to hearing the message of the gospel? How does she play a role in the spread of the gospel?
3. Given her standing in society and her business, what personal risks might Lydia have been taking in hosting Paul and Silas after they came out of prison?
4. From these verses, how does Lydia seem to understand what it means to be part of the body of Christian believers?



### **Meeting by the river**

The Jewish believers are meeting outside the city because, inscribed on the arch at the city limits of Philippi, was a prohibition against bringing any unrecognised religion into the city. According to Jewish law, there had to be 10 males who were heads of households and regularly attend services to establish a synagogue. Apparently, there were not even 10 of these men in all of Philippi to form a group and establish a synagogue within the city walls. So it was here by the river that Paul and Lydia meet at a Sabbath prayer meeting.



## Meet Myriam\*

“Susanna has been my best friend since we were children, and it’s through her that I can trace some of my Christian story. Susanna lived next door to a Christian missionary called Joanna. One Christmas, Joanna invited me and Susanna to a party. There was a local believer there who started reading the Bible out loud, telling stories about Jesus. I couldn’t take my eyes off her. All the words she spoke were just echoing in my heart. I wanted to dismiss it, but this woman, this believer, seemed so kind and gentle, a beautiful spirit. I just had to listen. The words seemed just for me.

Looking round, I could see another local family that I knew. Were these people Christians? Living here? I didn’t know that was possible. I’d never met a local Christian.

The lady reading the Bible came and spoke to me. Her name was Malika. We swapped phone numbers and kept in touch. I started weighing the Bible against the Qur’an. Realising the Qur’an wasn’t the truth, and that I couldn’t follow Islam, was like having to take off my own skin. I had to change everything about myself.

I would go to a little church gathering. I would talk to Malika, and there I would respond to Jesus. I wanted a beautiful life like Malika’s. I wanted to live out the truth. But then I would go home and pretend. Malika and the other believers would text me, they wouldn’t let me give up on the truth, and they made sure I knew that if I chose Jesus, I wouldn’t be on my own. I got more involved in our little church. I realised that I had something to give, that Jesus had given me gifts too. Increasingly, when I read the Bible I began to know peace, and everything else in my life seemed less important than what I was reading. Finally, I was ready to let go of the ties that bound me to my family and my community, and to live for Jesus. I told my family my decision. I even took my mum to church with me! My parents and my siblings haven’t followed me into faith, but at least they understand what I believe. And they know that you can be in this country, and be a Christian.

Our church is growing and growing. God is at work here. When I first went, there were about 10 people meeting together. Now we are about 20 people. This Easter almost 100 people came together to celebrate our risen Christ. God has put it on my heart to be a light in my community and to be able to give an answer for the hope that I have. The police know about us and watch us, but we need to be brave so that more people can hear and respond to the truth.”

*\* For security reasons, this is not her real name or photo.*



You can read more of Myriam’s story by visiting: [eu.aimint.org/faith-in-the-balance/](https://eu.aimint.org/faith-in-the-balance/)

***Questions for discussion:***

1. What does it mean to you to be part of a Christian community? Do you think it's important - why/why not?
2. In what ways might you feel differently about your Christian community in a context where Christianity was new, not allowed, or very much in the minority, like Lydia or Myriam?
3. What aspects of being in a Christian community/local church do you find encouraging? Which parts do you find harder?
4. What ways have you seen God at work within your local Christian community?
5. In what ways do your local Christian community serve God's call to global mission? Are there any specific ways that God might be calling you and your community to get involved?

# Leader's notes

This study guide is designed to encourage your group to put themselves in the shoes of the characters that we meet in the pages of the Bible, and to think about how different people might have experienced Jesus and the gospel of good news that he shares. Our hope is that they will help you seek new perspectives outside of your own particular ones, and consider Jesus and the gospel from the vantage point of different cultures and social structures, and so come to know and love Jesus in an even deeper way.

Therefore, the questions you will find in this study are very open and aimed at facilitating discussion at whatever level your group is at. As you are leading the study we would encourage you to be open to how the discussion naturally progresses, but there may be times when you will need to gently steer the discussion back on course. In order to help you prepare for this, we have suggested some areas that you might find it helpful to cover in the discussion for each study.

## Thirst quenched in Jesus

This study looks at the story of the Samaritan woman at the well and, drawing from the testimony of Rosina Ferdinand, a Malagasy AIM missionary serving among the Sakalava people, explores the lives of two women who are spiritually thirsty and who both have an encounter of Jesus which quenches their thirst and their questions. They both find themselves drawn back to their communities, filled with joy and a desire to share what they have discovered in Jesus.

The areas we suggest you might find it helpful to steer your group towards covering are:

- That Jesus' vision is for all people to have access to salvation (and the quenching of their spiritual thirst) through his death. The good news does not stop at the traditional barriers we are maybe a bit too comfortable operating within: societal, class, cultural, political, racial etc. There is no place for these in God's kingdom.
- Jesus is concerned with those on the 'outside', living in the margins of a society, and he invites and welcomes them in to the centre of his kingdom.
- That the Samaritan woman at the well recognises something about who Jesus is that others didn't. Jewish people (See Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus in John 3:1-15), and even the disciples haven't quite fully grasped it yet – they have not yet declared him to be the Messiah, the Christ. Jews traditionally believed that Samaritans had no claim on their God. Yet after this one interaction the woman asks, "Can this be the Christ?". Her experience with Jesus shows her that the good news he is telling her has power that transcends earthly barriers. Her experience as someone on the 'outside' (not a Jew) who discovers that she is no longer an outsider, gives us a full, beautiful picture of the power of true redemption.
- The overflow of the true excitement and joy that we find in Jesus can be powerful in witnessing to others about who Jesus is.

## Extravagantly committed to Christ

This study looks at the story of the woman who anoints Jesus with oil – in one account referenced as Mary of Bethany – and the testimony of a woman living on one of the Indian Ocean islands, who decided to follow Christ even though she is likely to face persecution for her faith. These are two women living in different times, but whose lives both demonstrate that the more we spend time with Jesus the more we understand his purposes and plans and can align our lives to them.

The areas we suggest you might find it helpful to steer your group towards covering are:

- Jesus understood Mary's actions as being 'to prepare me for burial' (Matthew 26:12). Through Mary's anointing of Jesus she is letting go of any expectations of what she thinks the Messiah should be or do. She is acknowledging she has heard what he is saying will happen and is submitting to him. She is taking on what would have been seen as the role of a prophet or a priest: the act of anointing was a public acknowledgement that Jesus has been set apart for a specific task, and was often part of the coronation of a king – symbolism that Mary would have been familiar with.
- This action and acknowledgment is costly to Mary as the jar of perfume is the equivalent of a year's wages, but she is more than willing to sacrifice this for Jesus.
- Mary is paying attention to the bigger picture, even though we don't know how fully she understands it at that point. This contrasts with the way Peter reacts in Matthew 16:22 by saying, "Never!", how the disciples in Mark 9:30-37 don't understand what Jesus means and then argue about which of them is the greatest, and how James and John miss the point entirely in Mark 10:32-45 and request to sit at Jesus' right and left hand.
- Mary's actions convey an incredible amount of trust in Jesus, and signify her acceptance that she trusts in what Jesus says will happen (and that it is *meant* to happen), though her full understanding of it may be limited.
- Maybe Mary has not taken her place at Jesus' feet for granted because as a woman in that setting it there have been barriers that Jesus himself overcame (see Luke 10:38-42)? She knows she is there by his grace and so she has truly valued all that Jesus has been saying, not letting her idea of him be shaped by her own expectations or desires.

## Serving Jesus through every season

Mary Magdalene is a character who has been much misunderstood and maligned throughout church history. This study takes a closer look at the role that she plays as a follower and supporter of Jesus, and draws upon the testimony of Queen Basupi – a South African missionary who has lived and served in Malawi, Botswana, and now, Nairobi – to think about how the ways we serve may change through the different seasons of our life, and how we can remain faithful to Jesus in each life stage, through both the joys and the struggles.

The areas we suggest you might find it helpful to steer your group towards covering are:

- The pattern that we see later on (in Acts) of believers in the early Church coming together and sharing what they have is a pattern that originated with Jesus. He gathers a group of followers (women like Mary, Joanna and Susanna, as well as the twelve disciples) with whom he travels, and who share what they have to provide for his financial and practical needs.



- Out of all the different ways that God could have provided practically for Jesus' ministry, he chose this communal way. In this model we see that supporting and providing for Jesus' mission is a two-way thing, where those who are providing remain close to Jesus, develop a relationship with him and are very involved in the day to day of his ministry. They are more than just financially invested.
- The way that women like Mary are treated by Jesus – healed, allowed to take up space and prominent roles within his ministry, valued as their own individual person – means that their commitment to following and honouring him (even in death) does not waver, even when they may well have been confused, scared, grieving or disillusioned.
- It is significant that Jesus chooses his first resurrection appearance to be to women, who he then instructs to tell the disciples, despite the fact that in the eyes of the world this will hold little credibility (even the male disciples initially don't believe them). But it shows that Jesus values and respects women (and their witness to the gospel), and that this good news is for them just as much as it was for men. It shows that Jesus does not discriminate against or judge people in the ways that societal structures often have, and still do.

## Part of the local body

This study explores how Lydia of Thyatira joins the new Christian community as she believes in Jesus and gets baptised, as well as drawing on the story of Myriam, a believer in a country where gatherings of believers are watched by police, and discusses what it means for them – and for us – to be part of this Christian community.

The areas we suggest you might find it helpful to steer your group towards covering are:

- It was likely that Lydia had a reasonable amount of wealth. As she makes the decision to follow Jesus, she recognises that she can use her wealth (primarily her home) to contribute to spreading the good news, hosting Paul and Silas as well as the growing church in Philippi.
- This church is the first recorded church in Europe, and although Paul and Silas did not originally intend for their journey to include Philippi (a city in Macedonia - now modern day Greece), it seems that God did. He causes them to change their plans as Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come and help them (Acts 16:6-10). It seems that Lydia's conversion is God-ordained and of strategic importance.
- We learn from Revelation 2:18 that later there is a church that is established in Thyatira, despite it not being a place visited by Paul on any of his missionary journeys. Could this church have been spread there by Lydia? The Bible does not say, but it could be possible as it is likely she would still have links with her hometown given her business.
- Her immediate offer of hospitality suggests that she understands that each believer is an integral part of the Christian community, with a certain responsibility. Her hospitality frees Paul and Silas up to dedicate as much time as they could to preaching and teaching. She also doesn't hesitate to welcome Paul and Silas back into her house after they are released from prison and asked to leave the city, despite the risk that being associated with them might have caused damage to her reputation and therefore to her business.

*If you or members of your group want to know more about mission or AIM, you can visit our website to find out more at [eu.aimint.org](http://eu.aimint.org) or contact us to find out more by emailing Debbie on [stc.eu@aimint.org](mailto:stc.eu@aimint.org).*