

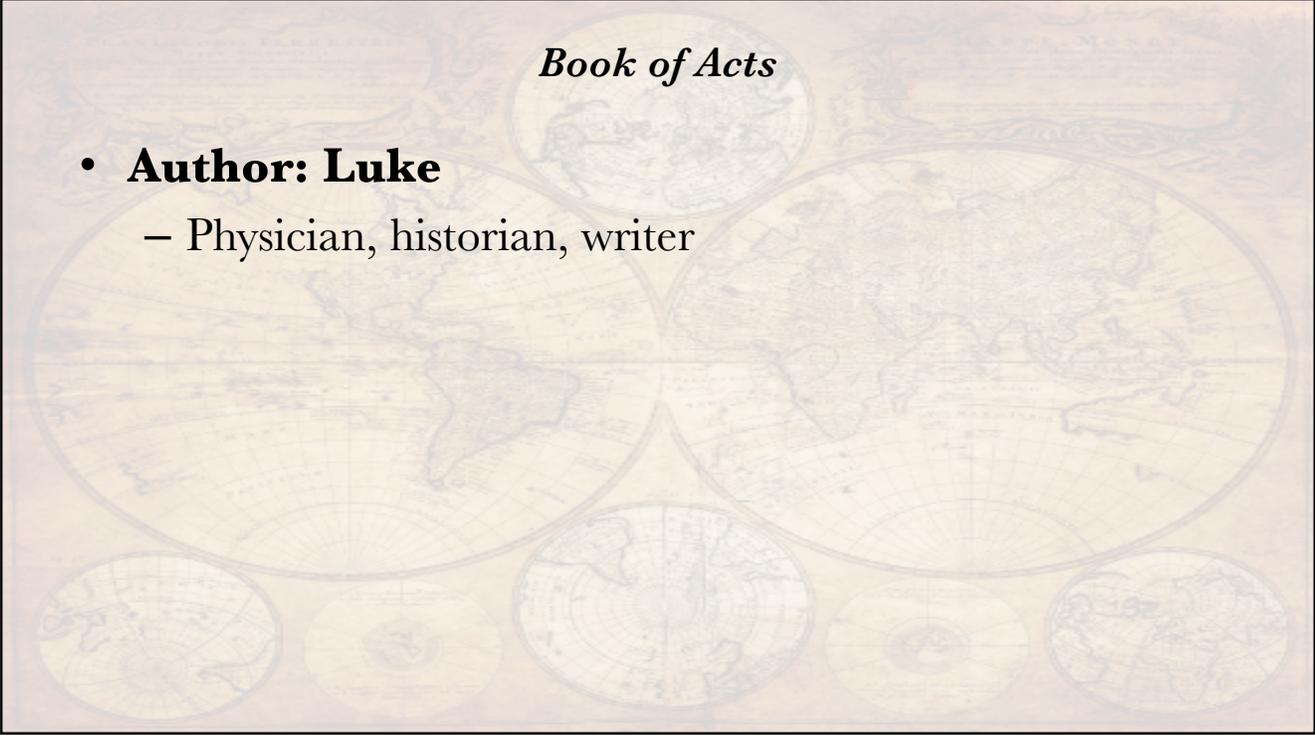
Guided (sometimes unexpectedly) by God

Acts 16:6-15

Brown Bible: Page 1109

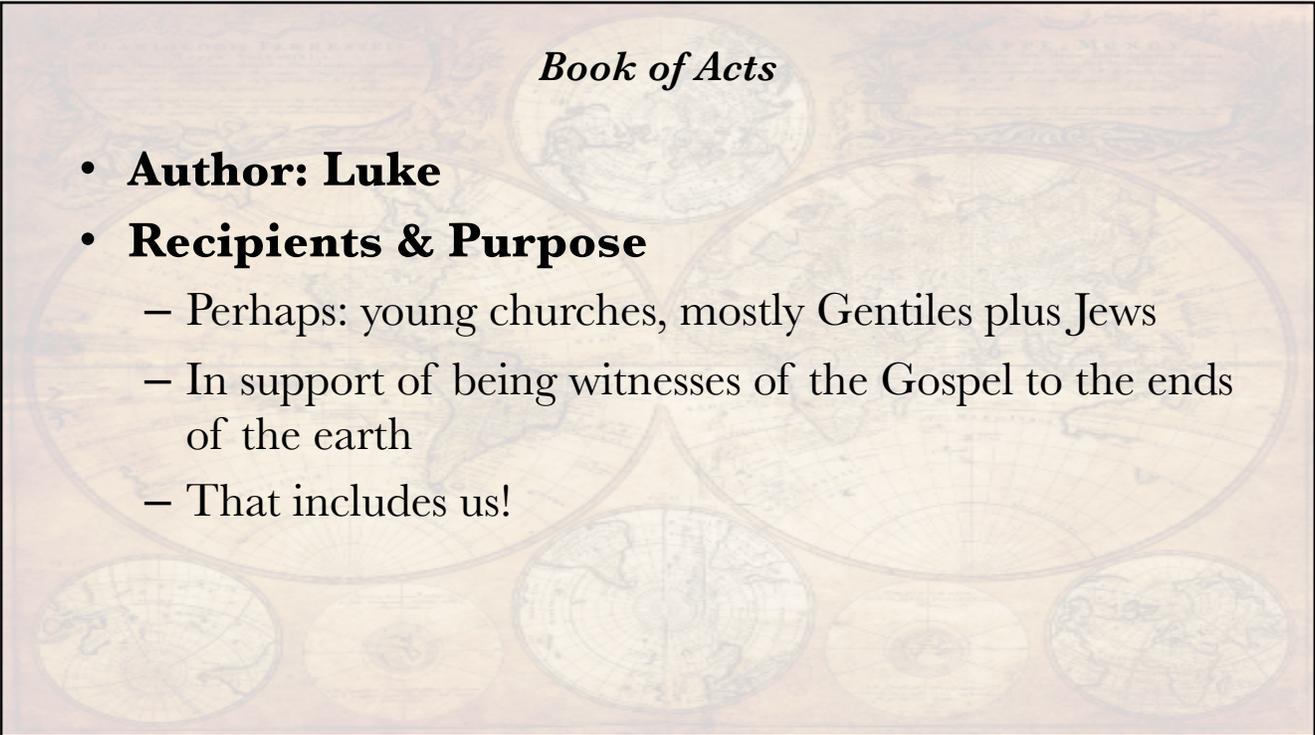
Listening to important voices

- Whose voices give important guidance to us?
 - Parents, teachers, doctors, etc.
- How do we know if we're hearing that guidance accurately?
 - Request in writing, rephrase, ask someone else, etc.
- What are the consequences if we're not hearing them accurately?
 - Miscommunication, frustration, all sorts of troubles...
- How do we know **God's voice**?
 - ... and if we're hearing his guidance accurately?
- Gordon Smith: *Voice of Jesus*
 - What do you think Jesus is saying to you at this point in your life, in the context of the challenges and opportunities you are facing?
 - What indicators give you some measure of confidence that it is indeed Jesus speaking to you rather than someone or something else?

The background of the slide features a collage of historical maps, including a large central world map and several smaller circular maps, all rendered in a faded, sepia tone.

Book of Acts

- **Author: Luke**
 - Physician, historian, writer

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Book of Acts

- **Author: Luke**
- **Recipients & Purpose**
 - Perhaps: young churches, mostly Gentiles plus Jews
 - In support of being witnesses of the Gospel to the ends of the earth
 - That includes us!

Book of Acts

- **Gospel for all people across all cultures**
 - The Word in Jerusalem – Chapters 1-6
 - The Word goes out from Jerusalem - Ch 6-9
 - The Word advances to Judea and Syria – Ch 9-12
 - The Word goes to Cyprus and Asia Minor – Ch 13-15
 - 1st missionary journey
 - The Word goes to Europe – Ch 16-18
 - **Acts 16:6-15 – along the 2nd missionary journey**



Acts 16

6-8 Spirit of Jesus guides unexpectedly

- Paul’s plans
 - Pattern: influential cities, Jews then Gentiles
 - Previously blessed - Acts 13:48-49; 14:1; 16:5
 - Current plans: repeat in Asia? ...Bithynia? ...Troas?
- God’s unexpected timing & priorities
 - Spirit blocks ‘preaching the word’ - not once, but twice!
 - ‘Spirit of Jesus’ = exalted Jesus continued to direct progress of the gospel
 - Years later: Paul’s fruitful ministry in Asia, Troas - Acts 19-20
 - God’s ways are wiser, better than ours: Isaiah 55:8-9 → Ephesians 3:19-20

Isaiah 55:8-9. → Ephesians 3:20-21

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the LORD.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

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<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

## Acts 16

- 6-8 Jesus' Spirit guides in an unexpected way
- **9-10 Paul sees a vision. Companions interpret together & obey**
  - Vision: Man from Macedonia → God's Word to Europe!
  - 'concluding' = used their reasoning and logic
    - same abilities that developed plans that God blocked!
    - 'we' & 'us' = Paul, Silas, Timothy, **and Luke?**
    - 'help us' = preach the gospel
    - 'ready at once' = prompt obedience
  - Shows importance and limitation of human initiative in Christian work



## *Acts 16*

- 6-8 Jesus' Spirit guides in an unexpected way
- 8-10 Paul sees a vision. Group interprets & obeys
- **11-15 God works through continued obedience. Gospel spreads!**
  - Philippi – Roman colony, leading city
  - Team deviates from pattern
    - 'expected to find a place of prayer' = continued discernment
    - 'outside the city' ... (where's the synagogue? leaders of the cities?)
    - 'speak to women' ... (where's the man from Macedonia?)
    - Gentiles ... (where are the Jews?)
  - God's blessing: Lydia's new life & hospitality
    - Lydia: foreigner, business woman, wealthy, connected, spiritualist
    - open heart → open home...hospitality shows genuine belief

## *Big Idea*

### **The Spirit of Jesus**

**guides the growth of his church**

**through people**

**who listen and follow his voice**

### *God's Guidance: Acts 16 & Christian Life (John Stott)*

- Not negative only....but also positive
  - Some doors close, others open
- Not circumstantial only...but also rational
  - thinking about our situation
- Not personal only...but also corporate
  - Sharing info with others to ponder it together and reach a common mind

### *Application*

- Be humble! → Beware of merely human thinking
  - *Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” - Matthew 16:23*
  - *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” - Luke 22:42*

### *Application*

- Be humble! → Beware of merely human thinking
- Listen & obey the voice of Jesus
  - Jesus takes for granted we will hear his voice
    - *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.*  
John 10: 27
  - intentionally, daily train your soul to hear his voice

## **Learning to listen to the voice of Jesus**

(Gordon Smith, Voice of Jesus)

Ways the Holy Spirit speaks  
to our minds and hearts:

- **Assures us of God's love**
- **Convicts us of sin**
- **Illumines minds in truth**
- **Guides in times of choice**

Daily Practice

- **Thanksgiving**
- **Confession**
- **Meditation on Scripture**
- **Pray through your day**

'Praying without ceasing' is difficult  
if we never find a rhythm of ceasing from all other activity except prayer.

### *Application*

- Be humble! → Beware of merely human thinking
- Listen & obey the voice of Jesus
- Trust God to guide
  - rejoice in opportunities and (especially!) in constraints
  - be ‘deliberately confident’

### *Oswald Chambers*

“Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.

...

I never see my way.

I know that God guides so I fear nothing.

I never have farseeing plans,  
only confident trust.”

*Big Idea*

**The Spirit of Jesus  
guides the growth of his church  
through people  
who listen and follow his voice**

*what does this look like for a church that is of,  
for, by many nations?...*