



# FACES OF OUR FAITH

LEARNING FROM BOLD + UNTOLD STORIES

## STUDY JOURNAL

## NOVEMBER 23 SERMON

## LYDIA



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There are many heroes of the faith, people we admire and wish to be. However, there are even more ordinary people of faith—those doing what they can with what they have to make a difference. We’ve selected 16 bold stories of those often overlooked in our biblical narratives. Using visual art and prompts for reflection, we hope to dig deep into the worlds of these characters, entering their stories with curiosity and openness to what they might teach us.

We have arranged the stories so that they have a narrative arc beginning with Genesis and the Hebrew stories, moving to the minor characters in the backdrop of Jesus’ birth and death, and concluding with the apostles and Christians who emerged in the years after the resurrection. We invite you to complete this journal at the pace and order that suits you. You may wish to ponder the reflections and prompts individually or with others. We have designed this journal so that it might be used as a personal devotional or as the curriculum for a group study series.

As we journey with these characters, may they remind us that we all play a role in shaping God’s story of redemption and grace. May they awaken us to the faces of our faith in our world today. May they encourage us to know that no action is ever too small to make a difference.

Artfully yours,

**The Sanctified Art Creative Team**

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As you journey with the biblical characters in this series, we invite you to name the faces of your own faith and reflect on how they have impacted you. You may wish to name friends, family members, mentors, pastors, public figures, strangers—consider anyone and everyone who has made a lasting impact on your faith.

face of my faith:

impact\_\_\_\_\_

face of my faith:

impact\_\_\_\_\_





Lydia of Acts |Lisle Gwynn Garrity





# FACES OF OUR FAITH

LYDIA

**read** ACTS 16:11-15, 40

from the artist | LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

As the reach of the apostles expands, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and their companions make their way through Asia Minor to Europe, stopping briefly in Philippi, part of modern-day Greece. Since there may not have been an established synagogue in Philippi, on the Sabbath they find a prayer-house on the river, a space filled not with men and high priests, but women. They join them and as Paul speaks, one woman in particular—Lydia of Thyatira, a Gentile devoted to Jewish worship, a dealer of purple cloth—listens intently, her heart expanding with every word.

Despite her outsider status (Thyatira was part of Asia Minor) and how women are typically portrayed in scripture, Lydia is a woman of power, influence, and dignity. Purple dye was a luxury item for the elite, so we are to assume that Lydia is an established businesswoman. She is also, surprisingly, the leader of her household. After being stirred by Paul’s message, she and “her household” are baptized. No patriarch is named—no man gets credit or gives permission. Lydia’s first act as a new disciple is hospitality. She welcomes the apostles into her home (without the permission of a patriarch). Later, after Paul and Silas are released from prison, her large home becomes the meeting place for the apostles and the growing Christian community in Philippi.

As the only Philippian convert named in Acts, Lydia was quite possibly the leader and patron of the Philippian church. She used her wealth to establish the community, she risked her reputation as a businesswoman to house foreigners released from prison, she sanctified her conversion with acts of radical hospitality. In this image, I wanted her eyes to be the focal point. I hope they draw you in, radiating her warmth.





## look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. What story do you give to the figure?

## reflect

- Imagine Lydia's backstory. Why did she move to Philippi from Thyatira? Was she married or divorced or widowed? How did she become a dealer of purple cloth?
- As a Gentile, Lydia sympathized with Jewish worship, but was not yet a full convert until she met Paul. Why do you think God opened her heart to Paul's message? Based on what you know about her, what gifts did she bring to ministry?
- Reflect on a time when you have received someone's hospitality. What are some ways we can implement radical hospitality in our churches?





## write

Lydia opened her heart and home to the Apostles. Her hospitality widened the reach of Christ's followers in Europe. In the space below, reflect on practices or habits you can adopt to become more hospitable to others.

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## pray

Open my heart so that I may radiate the warmth of hospitality to those who need your care. Amen.





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