

By the time Bobby arrived, the football game had already started. “Why are you so late?” asked his friend.” I couldn’t decide between going to church and going to the football game. So I tossed a coin,” said Bobby.” However, that shouldn’t have taken too long.” said the friend. “Well, I had to toss it 35 times.”

I hope you do not forget a good reason to have an eagerness in our heart to gather and worship together.

In today’s reading we see a woman named Lydia. The scripture introduces her as a worshiper of God.

Lydia was from the city of Thyatira in present-day western Turkey. However, that’s not where she was when the Apostle Paul and his companions met her. She was living in the Greek city of Philippi. Paul had come to Philippi after he received a vision of a man urging him to cross the Aegean Sea to spread the gospel in Greece.

If the vision led Paul to believe that people would mob him to learn about Jesus as soon as he landed in Greece, he was mistaken. As far as we know, Paul didn’t find anyone to talk to Jesus about until he reached the city of Philippi. Moreover, even then it was several days before Paul, and his companions found a group to preach Jesus Christ. A group met outside of town on the banks of a river for regular prayer. Moreover, ironically, there wasn’t a man in the bunch! In Paul’s vision, a man urged him to come.

Lydia, of course, was one of the women who regularly gathered for prayer at this spot. We’re told that she was a dealer in purple cloth. She had built a successful business for herself because she was later able to house Paul and his companions while they stayed in Philippi. It seems that Lydia already knew something about the true God before Paul got to her. She may have learned about God from the

many Jews who lived in her hometown of Thyatira. However, although she knew about God, she still hadn't heard that God's promised Messiah had come in the person of Jesus. This is what Paul told Lydia, and she believed.

The first thing we have to learn from Lydia is that even though Lydia was a successful businesswoman, she made time for regular worship. She must have been busy, but she wasn't too busy to make the weekly trek out to the river to join fellow believers in prayer.

We all have some routines in our lives. You probably have a habit of waking at a specific time, brushing your teeth a certain way, perhaps calling your parent once a week on a Tuesday night, or having a BBQ party in a Memorial Day. Such a part of your routine become habits.

Habits are so important because habits become you. The patterns that you choose to follow set the tone for your entire life. If you have a habit of greeting your children with joy, you will become a joyful person. If you have a habit of eating a vegetable with every meal, you will become a healthy person. If you have a habit of taking time to meet God, you will become a worshiper of God.

I think that you want to be a faithful Christian to worship God and follow His way. You have to have habits to meet God in your daily, weekly, or monthly routines.

For example, if you wanted to become a marathon runner, you wouldn't just jump into the first marathon offered by your city. It takes months or years of training to become fit enough to compete in a marathon race. Step one of reaching any goal is establishing a daily habit. If you want a

better job, you must start the daily habit of looking for work. If you want to be able to lift 300 pounds, you must start the daily habit of lifting weights. If you want to raise your children in faith, you must have the daily practice of prayer and worship.

Like Lydia, we must have the habit of worship and prayer in our lives.

Secondly, We need the habit of listening. Acts 16:14 says that Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to Paul. When she listened to God's word, God opened her heart. Listening is a good habit that a worshiper has to do.

Listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing refers to the sounds that you hear, whereas listening requires more than that. Listening is to pay attention to the person who is speaking, attending not only with our ears but with our whole body.

A minister's sermon concerned the relationship between fact and faith. That you are sitting before me in this church, he said, is fact. That I am standing, speaking from this pulpit, is fact. However, it is only faith that makes me believe anyone is listening. Are you listening?

We are easily distracted by other thoughts – what's for lunch? Is it going to rain? Moreover, I know it is hard to hear what I say with a different pronunciation, but I hope you listen to what God says to you. Lydia was a habit of worshipping God and listening to God. We must do the same. When we are listening and paying attention to God, God opens our heart and teaches His way in our lives.

Thirdly, we must have a habit of responding to God. Acts 16:15 says that "When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me

to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.” As Lydia and her family were baptized, she responded to God’s call.

One time a little girl was asked if she always came when her mother called her. She said, “Yes, but sometimes I go so far away that I can’t hear her call.”

Are we in that way with God? Do we listen to God and respond to God when God calls to us? Or do we ignore God’s call?

Sometimes when we listen to God’s message, we may think, “Wow! I’m not sure I can do that.” Or maybe, “I don’t think I want to do that.” God’s will may appear to be quite tough or hard, however, disobedience could be a lot tougher.

As Lydia responded to God about being baptized, some people need to respond to this same message. Others need to respond to other messages from God.

Don’t you want to make God’s day? The way to do this is to respond to God’s Word. When we want to make God’s day, God will make our day! There is always a blessing in positively responding to God. God blesses those who respond to God in surrender and obedience.

What kind of habits do you have to worship God? Do you have a habit of listening to your spouse, your children, friends? Are you listening to God? What is it that God wants you to do? It would be good to pray about whatever you think that God wants you to do.

Now more than ever before, we must have habits to find God's place of prayer and listen to God and respond to God.