



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N31 August 2, 2026

UNHINDERED

“Open Doors and Open Hearts”

Acts 16:1-15

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.”

Romans 8:9



Q?

How do you respond when God says, “No”?

The Holy Spirit is a person. Jesus’ teaching regarding the Holy Spirit (John 14:16) details the ministry of the Holy Spirit as one of comforting encouragement (Jn 14:16), companionship and indwelling (Jn 14:17), teaching and assistance in remembrance (Jn 14:26), assistance in our witness of Jesus (Jn 15:26), conviction of sin and righteousness (Jn 16:8), guidance into truth (Jn 16:13), and assistance in our worship of Jesus (Jn 16:14). The Holy Spirit is with us and in us, directing, teaching and leading us. As we study God’s Word and pray earnestly, God’s Holy Spirit changes us, making us more mature followers of God.

A significant “change” that God’s Holy Spirit works in us is the acceptance of God’s leading and direction. Often God’s Spirit leads us into great opportunities of ministry and blessing. God gives good gifts (James 1:17), and the gift of His Holy Spirit benefits us tremendously. But sometimes the gift and leading of the Holy Spirit warns us against evil and may even prohibit us from moving in a direction that is innocent or good by our assessment. Sometimes God’s Holy Spirit says “No” to us. God is good when he says “Yes” to our prayers but also remains good when he says “No” to our prayers.

Learning to say “Yes” to God’s “No” is a sign of spiritual maturity. Understanding and thankfully embracing God’s limitations, restrictions or even hardships delivered by his hand may be more important to the growth of our faith than seeing God affirmatively answer our prayers as we outline them to him. Being thankful for God’s “No” is just as important as being grateful for God’s “Yes.”

Corrie ten Boom, in her book *The Hiding Place*, tells the story of her time of suffering with her sister Betsie in the horrible Axis Power concentration camps of World War II. The ten Boom family had been aiding Jewish refugees by hiding them from Nazi officers. As a result of this mission, Corrie’s father was killed by Nazi soldiers, and Corrie and her

sister Betsie suffered immensely by being placed in Nazi concentration camps. In one set of barracks, the ten Boom sisters found their lodgings infested with menacing fleas. Corrie understood the importance of trusting God in times of suffering. But living with fleas was pushing Corrie over the edge. Betsie, meditating on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, prayed, “And Lord, thank you for the fleas...” For Corrie this was an outrageous prayer! Corrie writes, “The Fleas! This was too much. ‘Betsie, there’s no way even God can make me grateful for a flea!’” (Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*, 198). Betsie was insistent that God was to be thanked even with the presence of fleas. Later in Corrie’s account she shares that she learned that the presence of fleas in her barracks was the exact reason why the Nazi guards would avoid inspecting her quarters. Fleas meant no guards, and no guards meant that Betsie and Corrie could lead open and frequent Bible studies and prayer gatherings with the other women in their flea-infested and guard-free barracks. Corrie would later describe her undesirable conditions as following: “Side by side, in the sanctuary of God’s fleas, Betsie and I ministered the word of God to all in the room. We sat by deathbeds that became doorways of heaven. We watched women who had lost everything grow rich in hope. The knitters of Barracks 28 became the praying heart of the vast diseased body that was Ravensbruck, interceding for all in the camp – guards, under Betsie’s prodding, as well as prisoners” (ten Boom, 211).

In Acts 16, Paul sought to spread the gospel in a place that would logically make the most sense. Yet God repeatedly prevented Paul from doing what he thought was wise and good. To Paul’s credit, he did not quit or give up. Rather he looked for other opportunities and obeyed God’s move of him in another direction. When God says, “No” or “Wait,” we need to listen, learn and obey. God’s “No” may be a portal to his greater “Yes!”

Read Acts 16:1-15

1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

6 And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7 And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. 8 So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, 12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 15 And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. (ESV)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle the words that identify the ethnicity of Timothy's parents in v. 1.
- Underline the phrase speaking to Timothy's reputation in v. 2.
- Double underline the phrase that provides the reason for Timothy's circumcision in v. Circle the two results of Paul's ministry as found in v. 5.
- Double circle each reference to the Spirit in vv. 6-7.
- Draw a box around each use of the word "we" in vv. 10-13.
- Place brackets around the name "Lydia" in v. 14.
- Underline the phrases in vv. 14-15 that speak of Lydia's character.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Compare Acts 16:1-3 with Acts 14:8-20 and 2 Tim 1:4-5. What can you infer about Timothy, his hometown and his family?
2. Reconcile Paul's actions in v. 3 with the contents of Paul's delivery to the churches in v. 4.
3. Describe the work of the Holy Spirit as detailed in vv. 6-10.
4. Where is Macedonia in relation to Troas? What are some implications of Paul preaching the gospel to Macedonia and beyond?
5. Luke changes from third person pronouns ("they") in v. 8 to first person pronouns ("we") in v. 10. What does this change suggest?
6. What do we learn about Philippi from vv. 12-15?
7. Describe the woman named Lydia and how Paul's message affected her.
8. Compare Paul's vision (v. 9) with Paul's first mission in Philippi (vv. 12-15). What do you observe as interesting between the Macedonian call (v. 9) and the Macedonian mission (vv. 12-15)?
9. How do you know when the Holy Spirit is opening or closing doors of ministry for you?
10. What ministry advice would you glean from Paul and Timothy (vv. 1-5), the Holy Spirit (vv. 6-10), or Lydia (vv. 11-15)?

Paul's second missionary journey began in Acts 16. Paul and Barnabas had testified before the Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15:4) about their sharing of the gospel with Gentiles in Antioch, Cyprus and the region of Galatia. A letter of instruction for Gentile believers was drafted and sent by the Apostles to be delivered by Paul and Barnabas. This letter was for the purpose of explaining to the churches the limited number of requirements for Gentile Christians relating to the laws of Moses. This letter was to correct demands being placed upon Gentile believers that were too burdensome and unnecessary for salvation (Acts 15:22-29). After some time back in Antioch, Paul initiated a second missionary trip to Asia Minor (Acts 15:36). Paul and Barnabas decided to go in different directions. Acts 16 details Paul's return to the region of Galatia with Silas.

Luke begins his description of Paul's second missionary journey with Paul's return to Lystra. Acts 14 records the stoning of Paul in Lystra at the hands of opponents from Iconium and Antioch. Luke's depiction of Lystra is replete with descriptions of idol worship and confusion concerning the power of the one true Living God. Lystra is heavily influenced by vain idols representing a pantheon of Greek gods. In Acts 16, Paul encountered a young disciple named Timothy who had a Jewish mother (2 Tim 1:4-5) and a Greek father (Acts 16:3). According to Jewish tradition, Timothy's mother validated his ethnic identity as Jewish. But Timothy's Greek father would have classified Timothy as unacceptable to gather in Jewish assemblies, especially with him being uncircumcised. Even though the letters carried by Paul from the Apostles to Gentile believers affirmed that Gentiles do not have to follow Jewish circumcision laws, Paul thought it prudent to have a Jewish boy like Timothy observe circumcision so as to not be a stumbling block to Jewish audiences. The decision of Acts 16:3 illustrates Paul's stated principle of mission: accommodation. "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews..." (1Co 9:19-23). Paul did not contradict the Jerusalem council as Timothy was not circumcised to become a believer but was circumcised to help better share the salvation he already had more effectively with others. "Paul obviously did not circumcise Timothy because he believed that rite was necessary for his justification or sanctification (cf. 1 Cor. 7:19). He did so because it was necessary for effective evangelistic ministry among Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20-22; Rom. 14:13-15). Unbelieving Jews would not have given Paul a hearing if he had traveled with an uncircumcised Gentile, even though Timothy was half Jewish (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20). The Jews regarded an uncircumcised son of a Jewish mother to be an apostate Jew, a violator of the Mosaic Covenant. Paul was being culturally sensitive here" (Tom Constable, *Notes on Acts*, soniclight.org, 304). We would do well to do all we can to remove obstacles to gospel witness without diluting the clear message of the gospel. Methods and manners of communication can change while the gospel message remains the same.

Luke then describes how Paul sought to travel north of Lystra to advance the gospel into Bithynia (Acts 16:7). Twice Luke mentions that God's Spirit (Acts 16:6-7) prevented Paul from heading that direction. Paul made a western turn and headed to Troas. There he had a vision of a man calling for help from the region called Macedonia. Paul understood this to be a sign from God and immediately made his way west across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia (Acts 16:10). Paul was driven to get the message of the gospel out to as many people as possible. Paul's drive was directed by the Holy Spirit. Paul attempted to work his plan but did not agonize when his plan was subverted by the plan of God. We would do well to submit to God's direction in our lives even if that means that God may send us in a direction that was not on our original planning manifest.

It is also interesting to note that Paul's plan included inviting others to join him in his mission. In Lystra, Paul invited Timothy to join him in his ministry. In Acts 16:10, Luke changes his narrative from a third-person description ("they" v. 9) to a first-person description ("we" v. 10). Many believe this is an indication that Luke joined Paul in Troas on his way to Macedonia. Even though Paul parts company with Barnabas (Acts 15:39), Paul is not a lone ranger. He does not stop partnerships and additions to his ministry team. Gospel ministry is better with teammates and partners.

As Paul made his way into Macedonia, he spent considerable time in Philippi. Luke describes this city as a "leading city" and "a Roman colony." Population and regional influence may have influenced Paul's decision to remain here. The work of God in the city is evident in the positive response of many to the gospel Paul preached. Paul is enterprising in his outreach as he found a place of prayer near a river in the city. There he encountered a group of women who were willing to listen to his message. Even though Paul responded to the visionary call of a Macedonian man, Paul was willing to invest his time sharing the good news of Jesus with women who are found with an interest in worshipping the one true God. Paul shared the gospel with those God brought along his path. We would do well to share the gospel with all people whom God sends our way rather than primarily trying to force our way into audiences of the influential.

Luke's description of Lydia is significant. She is one of six people identified by Luke by name as believing in Paul's message during his second missionary journey. She is the only person named in Philippi. The jailer and his house believe (Acts 16:25-40) but he remains nameless to Luke. Lydia opens her heart to Paul's message and expresses faith in Jesus. This acceptance includes public baptism of herself and her household. Her hospitality to Paul and his team serves a sign of the sincerity of her faith and zeal for the gospel. Luke mentions her name again as Paul and Silas depart Philippi (Acts 16:40). We never know how the seeds of the gospel will grow in peoples' hearts. We should share the good news of Jesus with all people whenever God opens a door for us to share.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 3 *circumcised* “Paul’s purpose in circumcising Timothy is not to ensure him or others of the fact that he is now saved; Timothy is already a vibrant believer. His purpose is strategic. The Jews who live in the area know that Timothy is a Jew, but they would regard him as an apostate since he is not circumcised. If Paul wants to continue to have access to the synagogues, here and elsewhere, as a part of his evangelistic strategy, he needs to make Timothy acceptable to Jews. ... There was nothing inherently evil now in circumcision. It is a matter of indifference as long as it is not mistakenly taken as essential to salvation (1 Cor. 7:19)” (Clinton E. Arnold, *Acts*, vol. 2B, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, 149).

v. 4 *decisions* “The letter containing those decisions was addressed only to ‘the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia’ (15:23), but Paul and Silas saw the need to make it more widely known. One reason for this must have been the disturbance caused by those who were preaching the necessity of circumcision for Gentile believers in the South Galatian churches (cf. Gal. 5:1–12; 6:12–16). Since the decisions explicitly relieved the Gentile Christians from taking the step of circumcision, the mention of them here underlines the fact that Timothy was being treated as a Jew, and that his experience was no precedent for what Gentiles should do” (David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 452).

v. 7 *not allow* “When the missionaries have completed their primary objective to revisit and strengthen the churches, their initial plans to expand their preaching in Asia and then in Bithynia are twice vetoed by divine embargoes. God has different ideas. The account emphasizes that divine guidance, rather than human strategy, directs the mission” (David E. Garland, *Acts*, Teach the Text Commentary Series, 161).

v. 7 *Spirit* “The Holy Spirit prevents the missionaries from preaching in Asia (probably a reference to Ephesus, since Paul usually confined his mission efforts to major cities). Then, the Spirit of Jesus does not allow them to enter Bithynia. Luke does not distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus, which reflects Luke’s high view of Jesus’s divinity. ‘The Spirit of Jesus’ is also the same as ‘the Spirit of the Lord’ (Luke 4:18; Acts 5:9; 8:39)” (Garland, 162).

v. 10 *we* “Luke’s narrative now abruptly changes from the third person (‘he’ and ‘they’) to the first person (‘we’). The best explanation for this is that Luke, the author of Acts, now joins the team of Paul, Silas, and Timothy. It is possible that Troas was Luke’s home although there is a strong historical tradition that Luke is from Antioch of Syria” (Arnold, 152).

v. 12 *Philippi* “‘A Roman colony,’ and enjoyed a rich history. Named after the father of Alexander the Great, Philip II, the city had come under Roman control in 168 B.C. At that time Macedonia was divided into four administrative districts. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, but Philippi was a ‘leading city’ in the first of the four districts. Because of its status as a colony, the city was populated with many retired Roman soldiers, but there were few Jews. Rather than going to the synagogue as in past visits to a new city (14:1), Paul and his companions ‘went outside the city gate to the river.’ Here he met a group of women gathered for prayer. The presence of these women outside the city probably indicates that there was no Jewish synagogue in Philippi” (Dennis Gaertner, *Acts*, College Press NIV Commentary, Ac 16:12).

v. 14 *Lydia* “That she is named could mean that she was a person of some status, since it was normal in such a Greco-Roman setting not to mention women by personal name in public unless they were either notable or notorious. However, by the time Luke wrote, she may have become well known as a Christian rather than because of her social status. Perhaps she first became acquainted with Judaism in Thyatira” (Peterson, 460).

v. 14 *purple* “An inscription from Philippi mentions purple dyers from Thyatira. The purple dye was extracted from the purple fish (πορφύρα, ‘purple-fish’ ... Purple could also be derived from rubia, the madder plant, the so-called ‘Turkey red’ which was used in Asia Minor. If the imperial monopoly on purple, which is attested for the time of Nero, goes back to Claudius, Lydia may have been a member of the imperial household (not all whom resided in Rome); an inscription from Miletus documents members of the imperial household (the familia Caesaris) who appear to have been of freed status as involved in the purple trade. As a dealer in purple products (garments, blankets, carpets), Lydia would have been well-to-do. Lydia’s hometown was Thyatira (Θυάτειρα), for which the dye industry is attested. Lydia may have lived in Thyatira while owning a retail shop in Philippi which she occasionally visited, or she may have settled in Philippi permanently” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT, 680).

v. 15 *faithful* “Lydia as a ‘worshiper of God’ indicates that she had converted from her pagan past to Judaism (cf. 17:17). God had already been working in her life. She belongs to the ranks of Gentiles who readily accept the message about the Lord Jesus when they hear it. Once again, the agent of her faith is the Lord, who opened her heart to believe. When she is baptized, she offers hospitality to the traveling missionaries. She has the resources to do so but is also persuasive in prevailing on them to stay with her. Her hospitality to Jews and their acceptance of it underscore that Jewish regulations concerning clean and unclean have become irrelevant” (Garland, 162).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Share the gospel wherever God's Spirit takes you, avoiding unnecessary distractions, private agendas or preconceived expectations.



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

I didn't grow up in a family that attended church. My parents were restaurateurs who considered church a lunch crowd after Sunday services. As a child, I wasn't exposed to much about God, Jesus, or the Bible, but my grandmother would sing hymns while she cleaned house. And she cleaned house all the time! Though I didn't get much exposure to the Gospel, I look back at that tiny remembrance and am so thankful. Many of you can point to grandparents as strong, faithful disciplers who made a difference in your life. I'm not a grandparent yet, but I've got big plans. I can't wait to talk to my future grandkids about Jesus. I want to tell them all the Bible stories, sing all the songs, and take the with me to Bible study. Faith is never inherited, but I intend to leave a strong legacy of biblical truth for my grandkids. If you're a grandparent reading this, thank you for pouring into your grandkids. We have many grandparents who serve with us in Children's Ministry, and the kids cling to them. They have so much to offer; we truly appreciate the multi-generational approach to teaching our kids. If you're a grandparent that's not serving in the ministry, please come join us! We'd love for you to be part of our team, gently nudging our kids closer to God, discipling them to look more like Jesus, and encouraging them to change the world for the sake of the Gospel. Whether you're a parent or grandparent, you are making a difference in a child's life. We're praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 16:1-15

1. Who joined Paul on his journey? What do you learn about this person?
2. Who stopped Paul and Timothy from speaking in Asia?
3. Who did Paul speak to in Philippi?

What Do You Think?

Why was it radical that Paul and Timothy chose to speak to women on the Sabbath?

What Do You Do?

The Gospel is for all people. Who is someone that you wouldn't ordinarily speak with? Can you share the Gospel with them this week?

CORE COMPETENCY: Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit helps me become more like God.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 26:3

"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
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OUR MISSION

Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.