

Seek and Find

DEAR READER,

You have just finished reading the story of Silas, scribe to the early church and traveling companion of Paul and Peter, as told by Francine Rivers. As always, it is Francine's desire for you, the reader, to delve into God's Word for yourself to find out the real story—to discover what God has to say to us today and to find applications that will change our lives to suit His purposes for eternity.

Though we are told little in Scripture about Silas's personal life, we do find evidence of a very committed man. He was a prominent church leader and a gifted prophet who chose to set aside what the world would view as a very promising career. He willingly became a scribe, or secretary, recording the letters of the apostles Paul and Peter.

It is interesting to note that while three of the Gospels record the story of the rich young ruler, only the Gospel of Luke refers to him as a rich religious leader. The account of the two followers of Jesus on the road to Emmaus is also found only in the Gospel of Luke. Silas was a religious leader and a travel companion of Luke. So the conjectures in this story—equating Silas with both the rich young ruler and the companion of Cleopas on the road to Emmaus—certainly aren't impossible.

Whatever the specifics of his life, we do know that Silas shed his earthly trappings of position and power in order to walk with the Lord. His life echoes that of another writer, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Living Word, Jesus. May God bless you and help you to discover His call on your life. May you discover a heart of obedience beating within you.

Peggy Lynch

Chosen

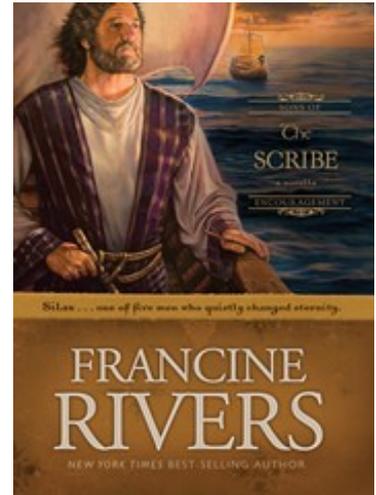
SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church, including the apostles and elders. They reported everything God had done through them. But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, "The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses."

So the apostles and elders met together to resolve this issue. Peter stood and addressed them as follows: "God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles. He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus."

James stood and said, "My judgment is that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead, we should write and tell them to abstain from eating food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from eating the meat of strangled animals, and from consuming blood."



Then the apostles and elders together with the whole church in Jerusalem chose delegates, and they sent them to Antioch of Syria with Paul and Barnabas to report on this decision. The men chosen were two of the church leaders—Judas (also called Barsabbas) and Silas.

The messengers went at once to Antioch, where they called a general meeting of the believers and delivered the letter. And there was great joy throughout the church that day as they read this encouraging message.

Then Judas and Silas, both being prophets, spoke at length to the believers, encouraging and strengthening their faith.

After some time Paul said to Barnabas, “Let’s go back and visit each city where we previously preached the word of the Lord, to see how the new believers are doing.” Barnabas agreed and wanted to take along John Mark. But Paul disagreed strongly, since John Mark had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in their work. Their disagreement was so sharp that they separated. Barnabas took John Mark with him and sailed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas, and as he left, the believers entrusted him to the Lord’s gracious care.

Acts 15:4-9, 11, 13, 19-20, 22, 30-32, 36-40

What was the concern of the early church leaders that led to this general meeting?

Which noteworthy leaders were present?

Who was chosen to accompany Paul and Barnabas to deliver the letter? How were these two men specifically gifted?

What was their mission? How were they received?

What events took place to part Barnabas and Paul?

Whom did Paul choose as a travel companion, and where did they go?

FIND GOD’S WAYS FOR YOU

Have you ever tried to impose restrictions on others? What happened?

Share a time when someone imposed restrictions on you. How did that work out?

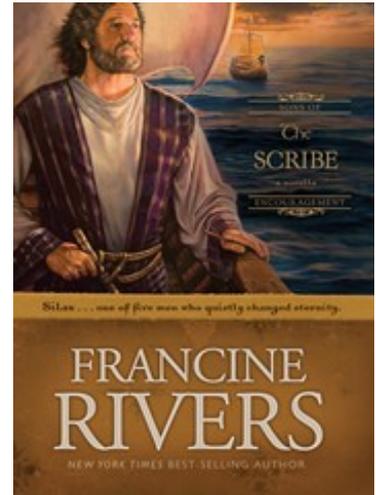
Whom do you need to encourage and lift up? What stops you from doing so?

STOP AND PONDER

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. Encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Convicted



Seek God's Word for Truth

In this story, the teachings of Christ disturbed Silas. Read the following words of Jesus, and see how they might be difficult for a prominent leader to hear and accept:

Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? You are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:44, 46-48

What does Jesus expect? Why?

If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. What do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?

Matthew 16:24, 26

How might Jesus' expectations have bothered Silas?

If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

Matthew 10:37, 39

Why would Silas have struggled with these words of Jesus?

Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private.

When you pray, don't babble on and on. Your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

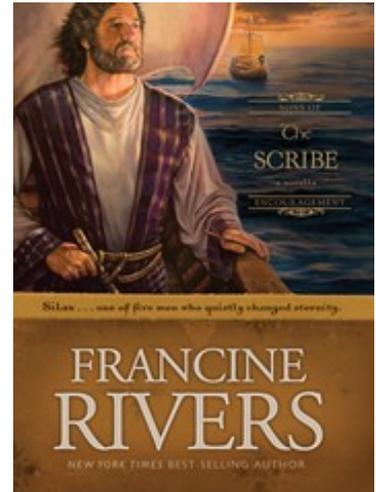
Matthew 6:1, 4-8

What instructions does Jesus give here? What warnings?

Who would Silas think Jesus was talking about? Why might he be bothered?

Don't store up treasures here on earth. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Matthew 6:19, 21, 24



Again, what does Jesus expect and why?

How might these words have disturbed Silas before he chose to follow Christ?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

Which of these teachings seem difficult for today's culture? Which seem unfair?

What seems to be the recurring theme?

Which teaching is difficult for you personally? Why?

STOP AND PONDER

Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.

John 14:1

Compelled

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR THE TRUTH

Read the following passage:

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages about the wonderful things God has done!" They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?"

But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

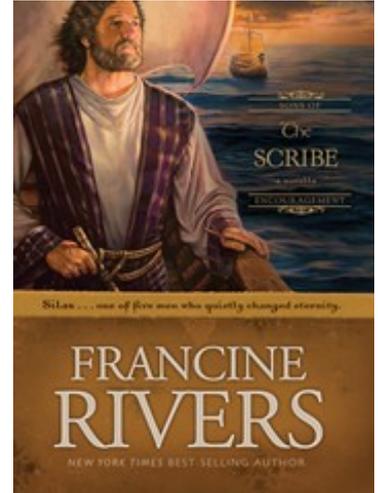
Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. What you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

'In the last days,' God says,

'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,



and your old men will dream dreams.

In those days I will pour out my Spirit
even on my servants—men and women alike—
and they will prophesy.

And I will cause wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below

before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives.

But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

"People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip. And we are all witnesses of this."

Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God."

Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

Acts 2:1-8, 11-14, 16-24, 32,37-39, 41-42

Discuss the prayer meeting described in this passage. Who was meeting together and why? Describe what took place.

How did the people respond?

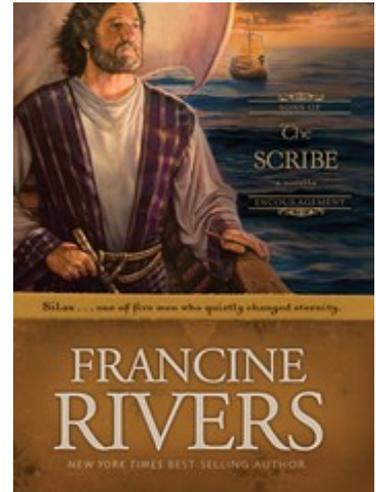
What did Peter do?

What are some key points from Peter's message that day?

What were the results of Peter's message? Why do you think this happened?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

Where do you spend your time and with whom? Why?



What influence do you have on other people? What influence do they have on you?

What lasting effect will your life have? What lasting effect do you want it to have?

STOP AND PONDER

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Confirmed

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:

Paul went first to Derbe and then to Lystra, where there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium, so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey.

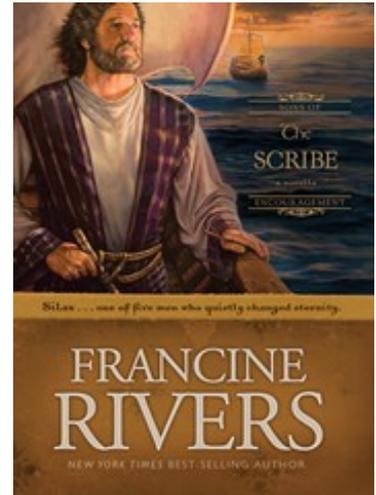
Next Paul and Silas traveled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had prevented them from preaching the word in the province of Asia at that time.

That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!"

We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. She was baptized along with other members of her household, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.

One day as we were going down to the place of prayer, we met a demon-possessed slave girl. She was a fortune-teller who earned a lot of money for her masters. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, and they have come to tell you how to be saved."



This went on day after day until Paul got so exasperated that he turned and said to the demon within her, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And instantly it left her.

Her masters' hopes of wealth were now shattered, so they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities at the marketplace. "The whole city is in an uproar because of these Jews!" they shouted to the city officials. "They are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice."

A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

Acts 16:1-2, 6, 9, 11-34

While in Lystra, Paul and Silas met Timothy. Discuss that encounter and the results.

Why did they travel to Phrygia and Galatia? Why did they avoid Asia?

Describe the encounters in Philippi.

What led to Paul and Silas's imprisonment? How did they demonstrate their peace?

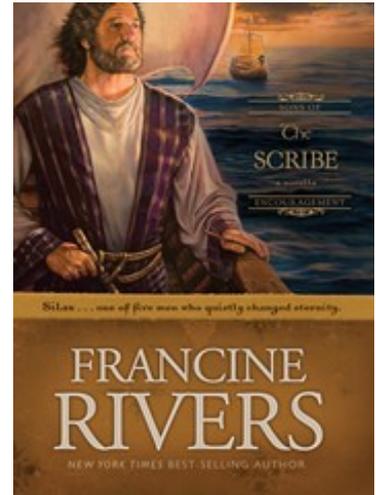
Discuss the earthquake and how the two missionaries responded.

What were the results of their disciplined response in the midst of mayhem?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

How do you handle the unexpected?

Describe a time God kept you safe.



What “chains” are keeping you imprisoned?

STOP AND PONDER

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Jeremiah 29:11

Conflicted

SEEK GOD’S WORD FOR TRUTH

Silas traveled with both Paul and Peter. In this story, he wrestled with the issue of celibacy versus marriage in relation to serving God. The following passages may shed some light on why this may have been a struggle for Silas.

The apostle Paul wrote:

Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to live a celibate life. But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

I say to those who aren’t married and to widows—it’s better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can’t control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It’s better to marry than to burn with lust.

Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you.

But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions.

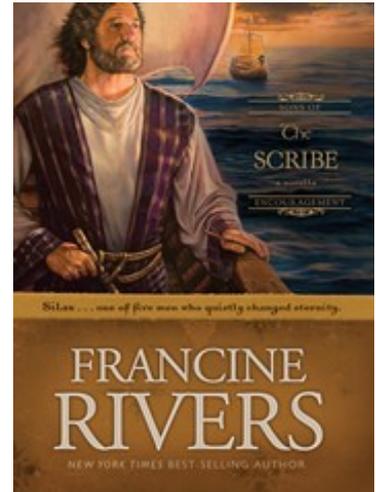
An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord’s work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 8-9, 17, 29-30, 32-35

What did Paul have to say about marriage? about celibacy?

What reasons did Paul give for not being concerned with marriage at that time?

How might these instructions have perplexed Silas? What “stamp of approval,” if any, did Paul offer?



The apostle Peter wrote:

In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives.

Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.

In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.

I have written and sent this short letter to you with the help of Silas, whom I commend to you as a faithful brother. My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God's grace for you. Stand firm in this grace.

1 Peter 3:1-4, 7; 5:12

Discuss Peter's view of a godly wife.

How did Peter view a wife's role? How does a husband's treatment of his wife affect him?

What did Peter think of Silas? What encouragement did he offer?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

How do you view your place in life? What roles do you have in various relationships or organizations?

How is God speaking to you about your personal relationships? Be specific.

Do you use your position/role to promote or hinder others? to restrict or to encourage those around you?

STOP AND PONDER

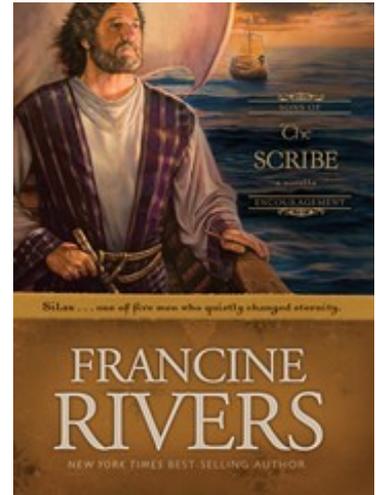
Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

1 Peter 3:8

Confessed

SEEK GOD'S WORD FOR TRUTH

Read the following passage:



Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: "Good Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "Only God is truly good. But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.'"

The man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young."

When Jesus heard his answer, he said, "There is still one thing you haven't done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he was very rich.

When Jesus saw this, he said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God! In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

Those who heard this said, "Then who in the world can be saved?"

He replied, "What is impossible for people is possible with God."

Peter said, "We've left our homes to follow you."

"Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come."

Luke 18:18-30

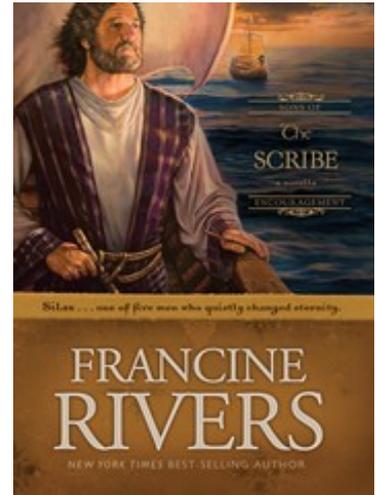
What was the first issue that Jesus pointed out to the young man? Why?

What was the second issue that Jesus wanted the young man to see? How did he respond?

What lesson was Jesus teaching His disciples? How did they respond?

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "What is impossible for people is possible with God"?

How did Jesus answer Peter? What was in it for Peter and the other disciples?



What is the relative importance of things and people in God's economy?

FIND GOD'S WAYS FOR YOU

What "trappings" in your life need to go?

How will you respond to Jesus? When?

STOP AND PONDER

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

