

How Does God Open Our Heart?

Intro: Within the religious world, and even in the Lord's church, there is a discussion as to God opening one's heart. Many simply claim that we do not know how God accomplishes this. However, we do know that He either does it (1) directly, or (2) indirectly. Let us consider each of these.

I. DIRECTLY

A. Some mysterious way.

B. Calvinism

1. Since man is totally depraved, God must send the Holy Spirit into his heart.
2. The Holy Spirit then opens his heart so he can do things pleasing to God.
3. Notice these statements regarding Lydia:
 - a. Acts 16:14 ¹⁴ "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."
 - b. Bloomfield, "The opening in question was effected by the grace of God, working by his Spirit with the concurrent good dispositions of Lydia."
 - c. Dr. Hackett says her heart was "enlightened, impressed by his Spirit, and so prepared to receive the truth."
 - d. Dr. Thomas Constable puts it: "Luke again emphasized God's initiative in opening her heart to the gospel."
 - e. Even though a lengthy quote, John Gill states of Lydia's heart: "which was before shut and barred, with the bars of ignorance, hardness, and unbelief. The heart of a sinner before conversion, is like a house shut up, and wholly in darkness; whatever degree of natural or moral light is in it, there is none in spiritual things; it is empty of the grace of God, of the fear of him, and love to him; it is without proper inhabitants, without God, Christ, and the Spirit; and is the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, who delight in dark and desolate places; it is bolted and barred with unbelief, and walled up, and even petrified and hardened with sin, and is guarded and garrisoned by Satan, and its goods are kept in peace by him: and this had been the case of Lydia; but now the Lord opened her understanding, and put light into it, which was before darkness itself, as to spiritual things; by which she saw her wretched, sinful, and miserable state by nature, the insufficiency of all ways and means, and works, to justify and save her, and the necessity, suitableness, and fulness of grace and salvation by Christ; which was done by the same divine power, that at first created light in darkness: moreover, the Lord wrought upon her affections, and engaged them to divine and spiritual things; creating love in her soul to Christ, to his people, truths and ordinances; which was done by his almighty hand, taking away the stony heart, and giving an heart of flesh: he also removed the bar of unbelief, entered in himself, dispossessed Satan, and worked faith in her, to look to him, lay hold on him, and receive him, as her Saviour and Redeemer; making her willing in the day of his power, to be saved by him, and to serve him:... not Lydia herself, nor the Apostle Paul, but the Lord opened her heart; Jehovah the Father, who commanded light out of darkness; Jehovah the Son, who has the key of the house of David; Jehovah the Spirit, who convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment."

C. This would make God a respecter of persons.

1. God chooses to open some, but refuses to open others.
2. Acts 10:34 ³⁴“Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:”
3. Rom. 2:11 ¹¹“For there is no respect of persons with God.”
4. Those lost could actually say they were lost because of God.

II. INDIRECTLY

A. Lydia

1. Acts 16:14-15 ¹⁴“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. ¹⁵And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us.”
2. There is nothing here that demands direct action of God upon Lydia’s heart.
3. There is good reason to take the Lord’s opening her heart as being done in an indirect manner.
 - a. Notice the statements both immediately before and after the Lord opening her heart (true in English and Greek).
 - (1) She heard.
 - (2) She attended to that which was spoken.
 - b. Paul was preaching God’s Word.
 - (1) Rom. 10:17 ¹⁷“So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
 - (2) John 6:45 ⁴⁵“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”
 - c. The result was she attended to what was preached.
 - (1) Attended is from a word meaning “to pay close attention to something, pay attention to, give heed to, follow” (BDAG).
 - (2) In Lydia’s case, by attending to Paul’s preaching, she was baptized.
 - d. Thus, the Lord opened her heart by the preaching of Paul; Eph. 6:17 ¹⁷“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”

B. Lydia harmonizes with other passages.

1. The Bereans
 - a. Acts 17:10-13 ¹⁰“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. ¹²Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. ¹³But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.”
 - b. The Lord was opening their hearts by Paul and Silas preaching to them.
 - (1) They received the word.
 - (a) *Received* is defined among other things as, “to be receptive of, be open to, approve, accept” (BDAG).
 - (b) It was with a readiness or eagerness of mind (heart).
 - (2) They searched or closely examined the Scriptures: the Old Testament Scriptures.
 - c. The result was they believed—their hearts were opened by God.

2. Parable of the sower

- a. Luke 8:5-8 “⁵ A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. ⁶ And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. ⁷ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. ⁸ And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold.”
- b. Jesus explains it; Luke 8:11-15 “¹¹ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³ They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. ¹⁵ But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience.”
 - (1) The seed = God’s Word.
 - (2) The sower = nothing but it would be the one who sows God’s Word or a preacher.
 - (3) The soil = the heart of man.
 - (4) That which affects the heart is the Word of God.
 - (5) It is the heart of man that determines if the seed, the Word of God, has an affect or not.

Conclusion: Ezra had prepared his heart to seek God’s Word; Ezra 7:10 “¹⁰ For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” God does not prepare our hearts for us; it is something we must do. God acts upon our hearts indirectly through the Scriptures.