

## Shaken & Empowered: Acts 16:23-34

A Presentation by Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri

**Materials:** Journal/pen or paper/pen (*you may also bring colored pencils or markers*)

### A. Sharing and Introduction

**Focus:** Paying attention to what “shook” in my soul as we read the word, shared, and prayed. (*Acts 16:23-34*)

### B. Acts of the Holy Spirit

**Focus:** The Spirit leading the apostles: Lessons learned and insights gained from the first 15 chapters of Acts.

### C. Shaken

**Focus:** Clarity and divine inspiration/intervention in the midst of the crisis.

*“Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, ‘**Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.**’ The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas... [The jailer] and **his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.**” (v.26-29, 34b; NRSV)*

### D. Empowered

**Focus:** “What I have I give you...” *Acts 3:1-11*

*“Each time a door closes, the rest of the world opens up.”  
(Parker J. Palmer in “Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation” )*

### E. Conversation in small groups

**Focus:** As the Spirit led the apostles through very difficult times, the Spirit continues to guide us today.

Questions for group discussion:

1. What insights have been gained from the conversation today? What lessons have been learned about being church in the past few months?
2. In situations of crisis, there is always a danger of focusing mainly inwardly and forgetting to focus outwardly. In our call to be church in the current crises, how are we caring for self **and** others? In balancing that care/pastoral care, how are we paying attention to the communities where God has called us?

3. In light of Parker J. Palmer's quote, consider what **you** have (*not in what you don't have or what others have*) and the *possibilities* of ministry today: Is there anything you can experiment with, plan and begin a week from now (or very soon)?

### **F. Sharing Insights**

Focus: Insights gained/shared from the conversations in small groups

### **G. Last reflections and Closing Prayer**

Focus: As described by Matthew J. Skinner, "Acts celebrates the witnessing church as God's instrument to promulgate the word and through the steadfastly confident depiction of the perseverance of the word Acts also reconfirms and celebrates God's comprehensive plan for salvation." (*"Acts" in The Theological Bible Commentary, Gail R. O'Day and David L. Peterson, Eds., Loc 10272*)

"My Lord God,  
I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.  
But I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that, if I do this,  
you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore, will I trust you always.  
Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death,  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.  
Amen."  
(Thomas Merton)