

PAUL IN EPHESUS

Acts 18:18-21; 19:1-22

STRUCTURE

Key-person: Paul

Key-location: Ephesus

Key-repetitions:

- Methods Paul used: asked questions and instructed group of twelve (Ac 19:2-4); spoke publicly in the synagogue (Ac 19:8); for two years, daily taught in a school (Ac 19:9-10); performed miracles (Ac 19:11).
- Results of Paul's ministry: twelve men were baptized and they spoke in different languages (Ac 19:5-7); some in the synagogue refused to believe and cursed the Way (Ac 19:9); Paul's daily teaching resulted in all who lived in the province of Asia hearing the Lord's word (Ac 19:10); after Paul performed miracles, some Jews tried to invoke Jesus' name with a demon-possessed man and were attacked (Ac 19:13-16); believers openly confessed their evil deeds (Ac 19:18); occult and magic books were publicly burned (Ac 19:19); God's word spread and grew (Ac 19:20).

Key-attitudes:

- Paul's persistence in teaching and preaching.
- Envy and resentment of some who refused to believe.
- Amazement at changed lives and miracles.

Initial-situation:

Paul and Barnabas left Antioch together on the first missionary journey. Paul and Silas started out from Antioch on Paul's second missionary journey. Toward the end of Paul's second missionary journey, Paul, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, traveled to Ephesus. Paul went into the synagogue and discussed Scripture with the Jews. The Jews asked Paul to spend more time with them, but Paul refused. As Paul left Ephesus, he promised, "I'll come back if it is God's will."

Paul left Priscilla and Aquila and set sail from Ephesus and traveled to Antioch of Syria. Later, Paul left Antioch of Syria to begin his third missionary journey. The basic purposes of Paul's third missionary trip were the same as of the second, to take the gospel to non-evangelized cities and to strengthen churches in places already visited.

Initial-problem:

Paul returned to Ephesus and found twelve disciples who only knew the baptism of John the Baptist.

Final-situation:

The Lord's word spread and grew in Ephesus and the surrounding region.

BIBLE STORY

Paul, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, left Corinth and traveled to Ephesus. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and traveled to Antioch of Syria (Ac 18:18-22).

Some time later, Paul returned to Ephesus and found twelve disciples. Paul asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we never even heard that there's a Holy Spirit."

Paul asked, "What kind of baptism did you receive?"

They replied, "John's baptism."

Paul explained, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. John told people to believe in the one who would come after him, that one is Jesus." The twelve heard Paul's explanation and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul placed his hands on the twelve and the Holy Spirit came on them. They spoke in different languages and prophesied, telling what God had revealed (Ac 19:1-7).

Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue for three months about God's Kingdom. Some refused to believe and publicly cursed the Lord's Way. Paul left them and took the disciples with him to a school owned by Tyrannus. Paul daily taught in Tyrannus' school for two years. Paul's daily teaching resulted in all Jews and non-Jews, who lived in the province of Asia, hearing the Lord's word (Ac 19:8-10).

God performed miracles through Paul. Some people took handkerchiefs and clothes that had touched Paul and put them on the sick. The sick were healed and evil spirits left the demon-possessed people.

Seven sons of a Jewish chief priest had been driving out evil spirits. Those Jews tried to invoke Jesus' name with demon-possessed people. They said, "By the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out!" One day the evil spirit answered, "I know Jesus and I know Paul, but who are you?" Then the demon-possessed man jumped them and gave them such a beating that they all ran out of the house naked and bleeding. Jews and non-Jews living in Ephesus heard about this, were seized with fear, and gave honor to the name of the Lord Jesus (Ac 19:13-17).

Many believers openly confessed their evil deeds. Many who had practiced sorcery gathered their books on the occult and magic and burned them publicly. They added up the value of the books and it came to fifty thousand silver coins (*50,000 times the laborer's daily wage*). Through the power of the Lord, the Lord's word spread widely and grew in strength (Ac 19:18-20).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Considering Paul's experience with the twelve men who were disciples of John the Baptist, what was the relationship between faith in Jesus and receiving the Spirit? (Review Acts 2:38 and 10:43-44.)
2. What happened in Ephesus to cause Paul to stop teaching in the synagogue?
3. What can we learn from Paul's reactions to his synagogue closed-door experience?
4. What happened to the priest's sons who used Jesus and Paul's names to drive out evil spirits?
5. What is the difference in real faith in Jesus, and trying to use Jesus for one's personal use?
6. How was the ministry of Paul in Ephesus?
7. What changes took place in the lives of some believers in Jesus?
8. What are some things Christians need to "burn" in order to be truly honest with God?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **The church planter needs a balanced ministry that includes: evangelizing non-believers, teaching believers, and training church leaders.** In Ephesus, Paul evangelized (Ac 18:19; 19:8), taught new believers who had incomplete knowledge (Ac 19:2), and he taught at Tyrannus' school (Ac 19:9). As a consequence of the training, all of the inhabitants of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Ac 19:10).
2. **Becoming a Christian involves both repentance (turning from sin) and faith (believing in Jesus).** The twelve disciples that Paul discovered in Ephesus knew John's baptism, which was a sign of repentance from sin. John's baptism gave evidence of repentance; it did not give evidence of new life in Christ. The twelve believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but they didn't understand the importance of his death and resurrection, nor the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul helped them to go beyond repentance and to have faith that Jesus died on the cross and resurrected, so that their sins would be forgiven and they would be accepted by God (Ac 19:4-6).
3. **Christians need to know when to stop witnessing to those who show disrespect for Jesus.** Paul quit the synagogue when the Lord's Way was slandered and it was obvious that the crowd would not believe (Ac 19:9). Paul's actions were in keeping with Jesus's teaching to not cast pearls before pigs (Mat 7:6).
4. **Jesus' name is not a magic formula.** Whoever tries to profit by using Jesus' name, as if it were magic, is putting himself at risk. The seven sons of a high priest tried to imitate Paul, using Jesus' name to expel an evil spirit. They were attacked by the possessed man (Ac 19:13-16).

5. **Following Jesus requires abandoning actions and possessions that are contrary to the Christian lifestyle.** Faith in Jesus results in both right doctrine and right actions. In Ephesus, many believers openly confessed their evil deeds. Some had practiced sorcery and they brought their magic books and burned them publicly (Ac 19:18-19).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Ask for two volunteers. They are to imagine they were in Ephesus when Paul was there. They heard Paul teach. They saw him perform miracles. They saw the Jews, who tried to imitate Paul and drive out demons in Jesus' name, be attacked by the demon-possessed man. They witnessed the burning of books on sorcery and magic worth fifty thousand silver coins.

Invite the two volunteers to talk about their experiences.