

Acts 1 Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Six: Paul's Third Missionary Journey – Acts 18:23-21:16

Complete the map given to you in Lesson 4 by tracing Paul's third missionary journey throughout this lesson. Paul traveled from Antioch through Galatia and Phrygia to Ephesus, where he remained for three years (20:31). Then, he traveled to Macedonia and Greece (where he remained for three months [20:3]). He returned back through Macedonia (specifically, Philippi, [20:6]), Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Kios, Samos, and Miletus (where he had a visit from the Ephesian elders). He sailed to Cos, Rhodes, and Patara. After he landed at Tyre in Syria, he went again by ship to Ptolemais, and finally on to Caesarea and Jerusalem.

Read Acts 18:23-19:7.

- 1) What do you learn from the following verses about Paul's ministry of discipleship: Acts 15:41; 16:1-3; 18:23; 20:2, 4, 17, 37-38; 21:4a; 1 Thessalonians 2:11, 3:1-2 (also, see Paul's example being emulated by his own disciples in Acts 18:24-26)? Paul was passionate about reaching individuals. Many who are named are those in whom he invested a great deal of time. Paul followed up with new converts, not only by letter but also in person (or when that was impossible, by sending a representative). Likewise, Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos into their home to disciple him.
- 2) What specifically are you doing at the present to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19) of Jesus? **Personal sharing**
- 3) Apollos and the disciples of John in Ephesus had a deficiency in their knowledge of Christianity. What do you learn from the example of Paul, Priscilla and Aquila that you can use to help someone whose knowledge of the Lord is incomplete? From the examples of Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul, we learn that we must be equipped to teach others the full message of the Gospel, speak boldly when someone is in error or lacking in instruction, yet sensitive in the way we teach (since Apollos already had a public ministry [18:26], Priscilla and Aquila took him into their home, rather than instructing him publicly). Apparently, Apollos received their instruction eagerly, for he went on to Corinth (Achaia) and "vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate" (18:28). John's disciples must have also been receptive to Paul's instruction since they were immediately baptized and received the Holy Spirit. Their receptivity indicates that their hearts were prepared by the Holy Spirit and fertile for spiritual matters (able to recognize truth and humble enough to receive it). **Personal sharing**

Read Acts 19:1-22.

- 4) According to this passage, what special signs did God give to the early church as confirmation of the truth of Paul's teachings and the power of the Gospel? At least on a few occasions, God gave the signs of tongues and prophesying upon receiving the Holy Spirit (19:6). He also gave extraordinary miracles (19:11) and the opportunity to hear a demon acknowledge Christ and Paul (19:15).
- 5) Acts 19:20 says, "In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power." How do the preceding verses (19:1-19) indicate that the Lord accomplished this? Disciples with limited knowledge became true followers of Christ (19:1-7); the Jews' rejection of Paul's message became an occasion for Paul to preach in a location where all who lived in the province eventually heard the word of the Lord (19:8-10); extraordinary miracles occurred (19:11); the attempt by some Jews to exorcize demons in Jesus' name resulted in many fearing Jesus, burning their books of sorcery, and making public confessions (19:13-20).
- 6) Just as Luke recorded the activity of God, many believers have found it profitable to journal a record of what they see God doing. Record the variety of ways you have recently seen God at work, bringing Himself glory, in and around you. **Personal sharing**

- 7) Church historians say that great awakenings to the Gospel have often begun with the fear of the Lord falling on a few individuals, making them acutely aware of sin. Acts 19:17-20 describes such an occasion. With which fellow believer or group might you partner in praying that your community, village, city, region, or nation will experience a profound fear of the Lord and consciousness of sin? If it is not already your habit, begin praying this way for yourself this week and write the impact to your own life below.
Personal sharing

Read Acts 19:23-20:12.

- 8) What do you learn about the city of Ephesus from the riot that occurred? **Ephesus contained the Temple of Artemis (goddess of fertility). Apparently a great deal of Ephesus' economy revolved around temple commerce (19:25). There was a theater large enough to house a substantial portion of the population (19:29). The people were very loyal to Artemis (19:27, 34). The government included a system of courts that demanded official, legal recourse over vigilante justice (19:39). Ephesus' position under the authority of Rome is implied (19:40 [where their accountability to a higher government is mentioned]).**
- 9) What do you learn about Paul and his ministry...
- from the riot in Ephesus? **This is the second occasion upon which Gentiles, rather than Jews, initiated aggression against Paul (the first time was in Philippi [Acts 16:16-40] and resulted in Paul and Silas' imprisonment). On both occasions, the income of one or more of the local citizens was threatened. Paul's personal safety was in jeopardy in Ephesus (his disciples pled with him not to enter the theater (19:30). We also see Paul more than willing to put himself at risk in order to defend the gospel [19:30]). Demetrius the silversmith confirmed the effectiveness of Paul's ministry and the scope of his influence (29:26). Finally, we see that God's protection of His servant sometimes occurred through natural means (in this case, the words of a presumably unbelieving official, who had no reason to care personally about Paul and whose only interest was in keeping peace and submitting to Roman authority and law).**
 - from Acts 20:1-6? **Paul had plans to leave Ephesus for Macedonia and Achaia prior to the riot in Ephesus (19:21). However, the riot was apparently an indication that God's time for him to depart had arrived. He was sensitive to God's leading through circumstances. Paul was eager to encourage believers (20:2) and constantly faced personal threats (20:3). He had a good number of helpers in his work (presumably men) that he disciplined and who supported him.**
 - from Acts 20:7-12? **A demanding pace and ministry stretched Paul's physical limitations. In Troas, he had only seven days to minister. The day before he left, he spoke all night (Eutychus fell asleep and tumbled out a window). After speaking until daylight and dealing with the emotional impact of Eutychus' death and resuscitation, Paul immediately left for Jerusalem.**
- 10) In what specific way does Paul's ministry, as recorded in Acts 19:23-20:12, challenge you? **Personal sharing**

Read Acts 20:13-21:16.

- 11) Recall what you have already discovered in the *Acts 1* study about Paul's basis for self-defense. Why was Paul compelled to include a personal defense in his farewell to the Ephesian elders? See Acts 20:20-21, 26-27, 29-30, 33-34. **Paul had been personally maligned in the past (for example, the Judaizers' attack on both his apostleship and his message). He felt it necessary to defend himself when he had good reason to believe that defamation of his character would cause some to doubt the truth of his message. Paul told the Ephesian elders that he anticipated some men would attempt to draw them away (20:29-30). Therefore, he reminded them of his thoroughness in presenting truth and in reaching a large populace, the purity of his relationship with them, and the way he conducted his ministry among them, lest they later be tempted to doubt his ministry and motives, and eventually, his gospel.**

- 12) Compare Acts 21:4 with Acts 19:21; 20:22; 21:11-14; 23:1 and 11.
- What fact did the Spirit of God reveal to Paul and others? **The Spirit of God revealed to Paul and many others that Paul would face dangers in Jerusalem.**
 - What difference existed in the way this revelation was interpreted? **Paul's loving converts interpreted this information as a warning that Paul should not go to Jerusalem. They believed he would be better off as a free man in order to continue his ministry. Paul, on the other hand, did not draw this conclusion. Rather, he saw the knowledge of hardship and imprisonment as preparation for future trials. Paul never seemed to seek trouble, so it is unlikely that he stubbornly determined to go to Jerusalem to prove his courage or resolve. Acts 20:22 says the Holy Spirit compelled him to go to Jerusalem in spite of the dangers. As it turned out, God used Paul's imprisonment to further his ministry (see Acts 21:40-22:1, 23:1, 24:10 and 24-26; 25:23 with 26:1; 28:1 with 7-11; 28:15-16; 28:23; and 28:30-31).**
 - Have you been called to a task or role that others (perhaps even some believers) find difficult to understand and accept? If so, what is it and in what ways has the Lord stood near you and given you courage to obey (23:11)? **Personal sharing**

From Acts 18:23-21:16

- 13) According to Acts 19:10 and 20:31, roughly how long did Paul remain in Ephesus during his third missionary journey? Review Paul's intentions for further travel in his statement in Acts 19:21 and the partial fulfillment in Acts 20:1-3. Looking at your map, which of the key cities where Paul ministered were located in Macedonia and Achaia (or Greece)? Read 1 Corinthians 16:5-9 and tell what Paul was doing and where he was when he wrote the book of 1 Corinthians. **Paul ministered in Ephesus between two and three years. Philippi and Thessalonica were in Macedonia; Corinth was in Achaia. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians during his long and productive stay in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.**
- 14) During what period of Paul's life did he write the book of Romans and where was he ministering when he wrote it (see Romans 15:19-26 and 16:23 [consider the city in which his host lived by inference from 1 Corinthians 1:14])? **Paul wrote the book of Romans from Corinth near the end of his third missionary journey. He planned to go from Corinth to Jerusalem, and then to Spain, via Rome.**
- 15) Paul remained intent on assisting churches and individuals from whom he was separated, even while throwing tremendous energy into ministering at his present location. Which person from whom you are distanced could you encourage in some way today and how will you do it? **Personal sharing**