



Discussion Guide - Acts 19

[CONNECT]

Name someone you admire who had to overcome great obstacles to get where they are now.

Acts 19:1-22, read it aloud...

[SET UP]

Why is Jesus the central figure of the Christian faith?

[DIGGING DEEPER]

In Acts 19, Luke records Paul's third missionary journey as he leaves Antioch for the city of Ephesus. This section of Scripture mainly focuses on the preaching and teaching happening in Ephesus and its surrounding cities. Ephesus was a port city which would prove to be vital for communicating the message of the Gospel. After arriving in Ephesus, Paul meets some disciples who classified themselves as followers of John the Baptist. After hearing this, Paul asks them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered no. They were unaware of one of the most defining characteristics of a Christian's adventure, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

- I'll ask you the same question; did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Share when you first received the Holy Spirit.

To further clarify the situation, Paul continues on by asking them which baptism they had received. They tell Paul that they had received "John's baptism." They have repented of their sins but missed the most important aspect of their salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In verse 4, Paul tells the group of believers that they needed to be baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus." After hearing the message of Jesus, they readily agreed to get baptized in His name. They agreed to put their faith in Jesus and Him alone. Then Paul places his hands on each of them and at that moment they receive the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands represented acceptance. Paul, as a representative of Jesus Christ, accepted these men into the family of believers.

- Where are you in this process of becoming a follower of Jesus? Believe, be baptized, and be filled, and be led by the Holy Spirit; what's your next step?
- Why is it important to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Paul's work in Ephesus continued for another two years, "so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." We know that Paul didn't keep the ministry of Jesus just for the city of Ephesus. Luke writes in verse 10 that Jews and Greeks throughout the entire province of Asia would hear the word. The message of the Gospel is for everyone.

While in Ephesus, the power of God was demonstrated in a mighty way through many miraculous healings. In verse 12, Luke writes "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them." Paul was an ambassador for Christ and so are you and I. Luke's emphasis was on God; it was God doing the miracles through Paul. The strange nature of these healings is meant to share an important truth: God is the one who heals.

In verse 13, Luke writes of a situation that gives us a humorous distinction between those who follow Jesus and those in it for their own glory: the Seven sons of Sceva. We read of the powerlessness of Jews who tried to use Paul's name and the authority of Jesus to perform exorcisms. Sceva's sons tried to use God's power in healing and exorcism to deceive innocent people. They were apparently recognized for their magic and sorcery. One day, an evil spirit said to them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man possessed by the spirit jumped on the seven and "gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding." This news of their defeat quickly spread throughout the city. Many would abandon their magic arts and publically burn their books and scrolls of magic which cost a fortune. It was clear; Paul has a greater power within him than any of the magicians.

- What are some prominent false religions? As Christians, how are we supposed to react to those with differing beliefs than our own?
- How do we respond with the idea that "all roads lead to God"?

After all this had happened, Paul goes to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. After this adventure, he finishes saying, 'I must visit Rome also.'" This would mark the final part of Luke's story of the movement of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome.

- Discuss what you've learned from this reading and from the weekend service.

Leadership Development

L: Leadership development. Who in your group is growing as a leader?

I: How can you as a leader involve your group in biblical service?

F: Who is a friend you can invite to become a part of your group?

E: How can we use this passage to equip us as followers of Jesus?