

ON MISSION IN

# EPHESUS

HOW THE GOSPEL TURNED AN ANCIENT CITY UPSIDE DOWN

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Welcome Note .....	3
2.	Equipping Evening Schedule and Note-Taking Space.....	4
3.	Background to the Book of Acts .....	12
4.	Maps of the Roman Empire .....	14
5.	The Story So Far: Summary of Acts 1-17 .....	15
6.	Timeline of the Book of Acts .....	16
7.	Timeline of the Church of Ephesus .....	20
8.	Maps of Ephesus .....	22
9.	The Story of the Church of Ephesus .....	24
10.	Detailed Timeline of Acts 18-20 .....	25
11.	Key Players in the Story of Ephesus .....	28
12.	Background to the City and People of Ephesus .....	30
13.	Extracts from Acts 18-20 .....	31
14.	Attributes of God in Acts 18-20 .....	35
15.	Mid-Year Vac Devotional: Acts 18-20 .....	35
16.	Answers to Tough Questions in Acts 19 .....	80
17.	What we Believe about Experiencing the Spirit in Common Ground Church .....	84
18.	Further Study .....	87
19.	End-of-Year Vac Devotional: Book of Ephesians .....	88
20.	What Happened Next in Ephesus? .....	109

# 1. WELCOME NOTE

I'm so excited about the contents of the little booklet you are holding in your hands, but I am even more excited and expectant for the year ahead. Permit me to explain my excitement.

Much prayer, conversation and dreaming has gone into Students Ministry at Common Ground Bosch PM for 2017. We feel strongly that God is calling us to step out in faith and be an extremely missional community this year. We feel God is leading us to be a more courageous, risk-taking group of people who will take the good news of Jesus to our campuses, residences, digs' and streets this year. We feel God have given us some clear directives which include reaching the lost, increasing in our diversity as a congregation and for us to think of ourselves as missionaries to the world around us - all day, every day.

As a group of students we are going to be on mission in Cape Town in 2017, but we will also be journeying together as a group through the missionary work of Paul, Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus in the middle of the first century.

The church in Ephesus is the church we have the most detail about in the New Testament (Acts, Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 John, Revelation) and we are going to spend time looking in detail at the planting of this church and it's first 3 years of existence - Acts 18-20. As missionaries to our modern cultures, there are so many lessons for us to learn from the early days of this church. In the short space of three years (the amount of time it takes to earn an undergraduate degree), we see the gospel take root in this ancient city and absolutely turn it upside down. The power of God transforms so many hearts, in such a deep way, that the very city itself begins to change, as certain trades and practices that are not in step with the gospel are threatened. That is power!

The contents of this book should give you all you need to know about the city, the culture, the book of Acts, the forward movement of the gospel in the city and beyond, and hopefully aid you in your study of these three chapters of God's word. The aim however is that our study of Ephesus from around AD 53-56 would change us and inspire us to be better missionaries in Cape Town in 2017 and beyond! If the gospel could turn Ephesus upside down then, it could turn our city upside down now - but it will not happen if we are not proclaiming it. How can anyone believe if they do not hear?

When I think about the future of our group of students and who I would love us to become, a very clear picture comes into my mind. Allow me to end off this note with that picture. I see a growing group of increasingly diverse followers of Jesus who know, experience and love the reality of God in all His fullness, who hold God's word as their highest authority in all circumstances, and who have no higher passion than that of making Him and His good news famous day and night for the rest of their lives.

I pray God makes this a reality,  
Kyle



## **2. EQUIPPING EVENING SCHEDULE AND NOTE-TAKING SPACE**

1. Introduction: On Mission in Ephesus (14 March)
2. Crossing Cultures for the Mission (28 March)
3. Growing in the Scriptures to Aid the Mission (4 April)
4. Empowered by the Spirit for the Mission (16 May)
5. The Spiritual Battlefield of the Mission (27 May)
6. The City's Response to the Mission (15 August)
7. Discerning Truth and Error whilst on the Mission (22 August)
8. Generosity and Friendship in Light of the Mission (29 August)



















### 3. BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF ACTS

The immediate aim of the book of Acts was for Luke to give Theophilus, a Roman official, a selective history of the early church following the resurrection of Christ. However, God enlarges this aim far beyond this to unravel the story of Jesus and the early church to people over the past two millennia.

Written around A.D 63, Acts is the sequel to the book of Luke in many ways. Both Luke and Acts were written by the same person, to the same person; namely, by Luke to Theophilus. The book of Luke is an account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus whereas the book of Acts mainly accounts for the implications of the resurrected Jesus and what He continued to do through his people.

From the opening verses of the book of Acts, we can see that it is not Luke's intention to make separate the book of Luke into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and Acts into the story of the early church respectively, but rather to account for the two stages of the ministry of Jesus.

The author, Luke, was a well-educated Gentile medical doctor. (Col 4:14) He is mentioned 3 times in scripture (Col 4:14, Phil 1:24, 2 Tim 4:11). It is evident that he was a travelling companion and friend of Paul. Luke was paid by Theophilus, a government official, to investigate if everything that Jesus did and claimed to be was true. Although Luke was not present with Jesus during His ministry, Luke's attention to detail and abundant eyewitness accounts serve him as a credible historian for the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as well as the story of the early church.

Theophilus funded Luke's investigation which led to both the book of Luke and the book of Acts being written, which make up 52 chapters in total, 1/3 of the New Testament. Without the generosity of Theophilus, we would possibly be lacking the largest contribution of the New Testament. As a Gentile, Luke made sure to give a meticulous account of everything he wrote. He did this so that those, such as Theophilus, who were not as familiar with Jewish traditions, customs, places, and Old Testament references would be able to understand the history of Jesus and plan of salvation and the story of the early church in Acts.

## 4. MAPS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE



## 5. THE STORY SO FAR - SUMMARY OF ACTS 1-17

It is only in chapter 18, that we get the first glimpse of the church of Ephesus. Chapters 1 through to 18 describe twists and turns that eventually see the church of Ephesus come into existence. The book of Acts begins where the Gospel of Luke ends. It describes the final commands of Jesus to his disciples and the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit. 50 days after Jesus is crucified, the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit sets the church ablaze and the rest of the book of Acts describes what unfolds.

The disciples have been left with the message of Christ and are now empowered by the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The first sermon in the life of the church is preached by Peter, which God uses to remarkably impact thousands of listeners, seeing three thousand added to the church in a single day. The church met daily in each other's homes and encouraged one another with the teachings of Jesus. Still, more were being added day by day. Miraculous healings and more preaching took place by the hands and mouths of the disciples, gossiping the message of Christ whenever they got a chance.

As the disciples were rapidly increasing in number, some were selected to do specific duties, to allow the apostles to continue preaching the word of God. Stephen, a man full of the Holy Spirit was one of these men. In Acts chapter 7, Stephen is killed for believing in Jesus. The stoning of Stephen saw a rise in the tide of the persecution of Christians. One of the men at the forefront of the persecution was Saul, a pharisee, fervent in his pursuit to halt the Gospel from spreading. However, after an encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, Saul is changed forever. His dramatic conversion changes not only the trajectory of his own life, but also that of the church. Saul, who becomes Paul, immediately begins to proclaim Christ in the synagogues. As Paul continues to preach, God gives Peter a vision to take the gospel to the Gentiles. The Gentiles hear the good news and are baptised in the Holy Spirit. The persecution continues to increase, but the gospel continues to spread. In Acts 12, James is killed at the hand of Herod, and Peter is imprisoned, only to be freed by an angel.

Barnabas and Paul are called out by the Holy Spirit and sent off to Cyprus to preach the news of Christ. Paul and Barnabas continue their travels, proclaiming Christ in the synagogues and marketplaces and strengthening the churches. They continue on from Cyprus through to Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, where Paul is stoned and almost killed. They continue to preach and raise up leaders in the churches. In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas separate and Paul chooses Silas to join him. Timothy joins Paul and Silas not long after. As persecution increased, the churches were strengthened in their faith and they increased in numbers daily. Paul moved on to Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens, reasoning in the synagogues and the marketplaces.

Paul addresses the Areopagus in Acts 17, encouraging his listeners to believe in Christ. Paul then leaves Athens and heads to Corinth where he meets Priscilla and Aquila before returning to Antioch and eventually being led to Ephesus, where the story of the Ephesian church begins.

## 6. TIMELINE OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

[Dates may differ by a year or two according to different theologians and historians.]

<p><b>Acts 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Promise of the Holy Spirit</li> <li>- The Ascension</li> <li>- Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas</li> </ul>	AD 30
<p><b>Acts 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Coming of the Holy Spirit</li> <li>- Peter's Sermon at Pentecost</li> <li>- The Fellowship of the Believers</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Acts 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Lame Beggar Healed</li> <li>- Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico</li> </ul>	AD 31
<p><b>Acts 4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peter and John Before the Council</li> <li>- The Believers Pray for Boldness</li> <li>- They had Everything in Common</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Acts 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ananias and Sapphira</li> <li>- Many Signs and Wonders Done</li> <li>- The Apostles Arrested and Freed</li> </ul>	AD 32
<p><b>Acts 6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seven Chosen to Serve</li> <li>- Stephen is Seized</li> </ul>	AD 34
<p><b>Acts 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stephen's Speech</li> <li>- The Stoning of Stephen</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Acts 8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Saul Ravages the Church</li> <li>- Philip Proclaims Christ in Samaria</li> <li>- Simon the Magician Believes</li> <li>- Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Acts 9</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Conversion of Saul</li> <li>- Saul Proclaims Jesus in Synagogues</li> <li>- Saul Escapes from Damascus</li> <li>- Saul in Jerusalem</li> </ul>	AD 35  AD 38



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Healing of Aeneas</li> <li>- Dorcas Restored to Life</li> </ul>	AD 39
<p><b>Acts 10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peter and Cornelius</li> <li>- Peter's Vision</li> <li>- Gentiles Hear the Good News</li> <li>- The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Acts 11</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peter Reports to the Church</li> <li>- The Church in Antioch</li> </ul>	AD 40
<p><b>Acts 12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- James Killed and Peter Imprisoned</li> <li>- Peter is Rescued</li> <li>- The Death of Herod</li> </ul>	AD 44 AD 45
<p><b>Acts 13</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Barnabas and Saul Sent Off</li> <li>- Paul embarks on his first missionary journey</li> <li>- Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus</li> <li>- Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia</li> </ul>	AD 46
<p><b>Acts 14</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul and Barnabas at Iconium</li> <li>- Paul and Barnabas at Lystra</li> <li>- Paul Stoned at Lystra</li> <li>- Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch in Syria</li> </ul>	AD 47
<p><b>Acts 15</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Jerusalem Council</li> <li>- The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers</li> <li>- Paul and Barnabas Separate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul embarks on his second missionary journey</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	AD 48 AD 49
<p><b>Acts 16</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Timothy Joins Paul and Silas</li> <li>- The Macedonian Call</li> <li>- The Conversion of Lydia</li> <li>- Paul and Silas in Prison</li> <li>- The Philippian Jailer Converted</li> </ul>	AD 50
<p><b>Acts 17</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul and Silas in Thessalonica</li> <li>- Paul and Silas in Berea</li> <li>- Paul in Athens</li> </ul>	

- Paul Addresses the Areopagus	
<b>Acts 18</b> - Paul in Corinth - While in Corinth Paul (along with Timothy and Silas) writes the first letter to the Thessalonians, and shortly after; the second. - Paul Returns to Antioch - This marks the end of his second missionary journey. - He leaves Antioch to tour Galatia and Phrygia - this is the start of his third missionary journey. - Apollos Speaks Boldly in Ephesus	(Still AD 50) AD 49-51  AD 52  AD 53
<b>Acts 19</b> - Paul in Ephesus - The Sons of Sceva - A Riot at Ephesus	AD 54 - 56
<b>Acts 20</b> - Paul in Macedonia and Greece - Eutychus Raised from the Dead - Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders	AD 57
<b>Acts 21</b> - Paul Goes to Jerusalem - Paul Visits James - Paul Arrested in the Temple - Paul Speaks to the People	
<b>Acts 22</b> - Paul and the Roman Tribune - Paul Before the Council	
<b>Acts 23</b> - A Plot to Kill Paul - Paul Sent to Felix the Governor	
<b>Acts 24</b> - Paul Before Felix at Caesarea - Paul Kept in Custody	For 2 years
<b>Acts 25</b> - Paul Appeals to Caesar - Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice	AD 59

<p><b>Acts 26</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul's Defense Before Agrippa</li> <li>- Paul Tells of His Conversion</li> </ul>	<p>AD 60</p>
<p><b>Acts 27</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul Sails for Rome</li> <li>- The Storm at Sea</li> <li>- The Shipwreck</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Acts 28</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul on Malta</li> <li>- Paul Arrives at Rome</li> <li>- Paul in Rome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul writes his letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and to Philemon from Rome.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- His letter to Titus and first letter to Timothy were also written from Rome.</li> <li>- Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy while he was in prison in Rome.</li> </ul>	<p>For 3 months</p> <p>AD 62</p> <p>Mid AD 60s</p> <p>AD 64-65</p>

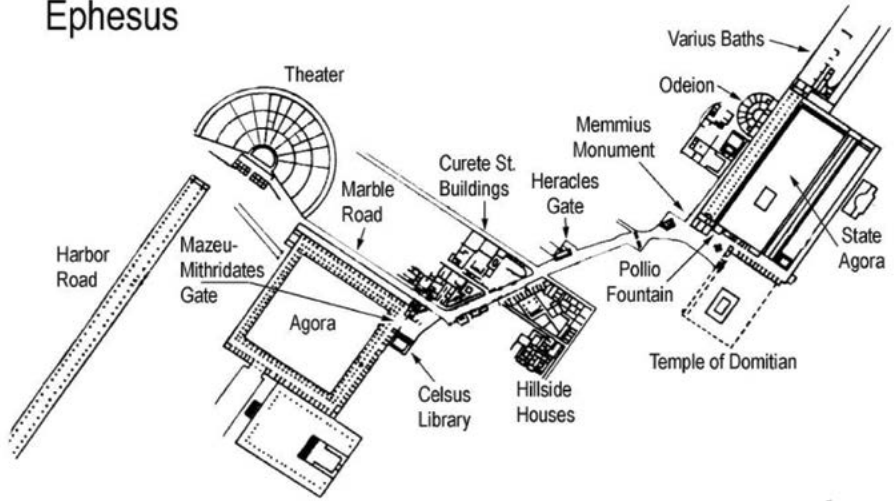
## 7. TIMELINE OF THE CHURCH OF EPHEBUS

<b>Acts 18</b>	AD 52	<p>The church of Ephesus is born. Paul stops in Ephesus briefly and leaves Priscilla and Aquila there.</p> <p>Why does Paul leave Ephesus? Some historians suggest he needed to reach Jerusalem for the passover festival, while others think that it was simply not a major part of his plans and merely a short stopover on his way to report back to his church in Antioch.</p>
	AD 53	<p>Apollos teaches about Jesus and Priscilla and Aquila explain to him the way of the Lord more accurately.</p> <p>These three (Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila) build the church while Paul is touring Galatia and Phrygia - the start of his third missionary journey.</p>
<b>Acts 19</b>	AD 54	<p>Apollos leaves Ephesus and Paul returns.</p> <p>Paul brings the ministry of the Holy Spirit which transforms the church as twelve are baptised in the Holy Spirit and begin prophesying and speaking in tongues. God performs miracles through the hands of Paul.</p> <p>Paul preaches daily in the hall of Tyrannus. The gospel begins to take root in the city. The church grows.</p>
<b>Acts 20</b>	AD 57	<p>Paul leaves Ephesus.</p> <p>While in Miletus, Paul addresses the Ephesian elders from verse 17. During this address, Paul encourages them, but he also predicts that false teachers will arise within the church.</p>
<b>Acts 28</b>	AD 62	<p>While Paul is in Rome, he writes a letter back to the church in Ephesus.</p>
<b>Post-Acts</b>	AD 63	<p>Timothy returns to Ephesus. He becomes an elder of the church there.</p>
	AD 67	<p>Paul put to death by Nero</p>
	AD 70	<p>John flees to Ephesus after the temple is destroyed in</p>
	AD 81	<p>Jerusalem. He also becomes an elder of the church. Timothy clubbed to death by pagans in Ephesus.</p>

<b>Gospel of John</b>	AD 80s - 90s	Written by John from Ephesus. (The dating of John's gospel is very uncertain.)
<b>John's Epistles</b>	Early AD 90s	John wrote his three letters (1, 2 and 3 John) from Ephesus.
<b>Revelation</b>	AD 95	The book of Revelation was written by John to the church of Ephesus and its surrounds from the island of Patmos where he was in exile.  Revelation 2 tells us that the church of Ephesus will die out because they have forsaken their first love.
<b>Post-Bible</b>	AD 96	John returns to Ephesus.
	AD 100	John dies.
	AD ??	The church of Ephesus dies Eventually the Revelation 2 prophecy comes to pass for the church of Ephesus. The church becomes plagued by doctrinal arrogance and lose their whole-hearted devotion to God and thus cease to exist.

## 8. MAPS OF EPHESUS

### Central Ephesus





## 9. THE STORY OF THE CHURCH OF EPHEBUS

In the early days of the Ephesus church we see a raw and heartfelt confession of sin and a decision to do something about it. But what happened after that? What was the next step, after this beautiful admission of sin? In Acts 20, in Paul's final words to the Ephesian elders, he, in a Spirit-led prophecy, warns his co-labourers that false teachers will rise up among them - that wolves will come into the flock and lead sheep astray - away from the truth of the gospel. This seems like a less than ideal future for the church of Ephesus.

We know that Paul's prophecy does in fact come to pass. In his letter to the Ephesian Christians, Paul doesn't reference the exact doctrinal climate of Ephesus, but he does implore the Ephesians to speak and preach the truth and to reject false teaching. The doctrinal situation in Ephesus is made more clear in Paul's two letters to Timothy - one of the Ephesian elders - which was written only a few years after the Acts 20 prophecy. These letters make it clear that the prophecy had come true and that controversy had taken root in Ephesus. Some people were trying to change the gospel and its true nature. Then, in 1 and 2 John, written by another Ephesian elder (John), we can deduce that some false teachers in Ephesus have suggested to the flock that confessing and repenting of sin was unnecessary. These various letters give us a small hint into the heresy growing in the church of Ephesus.

But, our biggest window into the nature of the Ephesian church comes in Revelation 2. This passage of scripture shows us that the church in Ephesus is doing really well in a few departments: they have notable patience through suffering and an appropriate intolerance of evil and it seems that they have been able to identify false teaching by knowing the truth and having a sound doctrine. These things sound great, but ... There's a "but". The church in Ephesus is warned that they have abandoned their first love. What does this mean? The text tells the Ephesians that if they don't repent and go back to what they were doing at first, that the church would die. But, what were they doing at first? What should they go back to? These questions beg us to return to Acts 18-20. What was special about the church of Ephesus in these early stages? People's lives were being radically changed! Vast numbers of magic books were being burned as the Ephesians were boldly turning away from their sins. Matt Chandler, in his book "The Explicit Gospel," says this about the change in the Ephesian church:

... somehow, over time, Ephesus had become civilised and somewhat cold and obsessively acute in their doctrinal awareness, so they aligned themselves with what was true but lost their missional edge. They had embraced an overly rationalized faith. Their head was in the right place, but their heart had not followed. They had the appearance of godliness but denied the power therein to produce radical affection for Jesus, radical repentance from sin, and radical love for a lost world.

Ultimately, the church in Ephesus had become too prideful and had grown further and further away from their original, radical, life-changing love for the Lord.









## 11. KEY PLAYERS IN THE STORY OF EPHEBUS

### PAUL:

Paul, formerly known as Saul, is first introduced in Acts 8, where he is present at the stoning of Stephen. Paul was born in Tarsus, brought up in Jerusalem and educated at the school of Gamaliel, a teacher of Jewish law. Before his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul sought to quieten the quickly spreading message of the Gospel. After believing in Christ, Paul set out to spread the very message he had sought to destroy. Paul was the writer of 1/3 of the New Testament, and an important character in the movements of the early church throughout the book of Acts. Paul went on three major missionary trips in the book of Acts, starting in A.D 46, all several years in length. Although the Bible does not mention Paul's death, it is believed that he was put to death at the hand of Nero in around A.D 67.

### LUKE:

Luke was a gentile physician sent by a Roman official, Theophilus, to record and account for the life of Jesus as well as the early church. Luke is the writer of two books in the New Testament; the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Although he was not an eyewitness to Jesus' life on earth, he had abundant eyewitness accounts to serve him in his account. It was likely that he was not a Christ-follower when he first joined Paul on his travels, but became one as he continued to investigate the claims of Christ and witnessed the early church expand. New Testament scholars say that Luke wrote as a historian, as a diplomat and as a theologian-evangelist. Later, he followed Paul into martyrdom, serving the Lord faithfully.

### PRISCILLA AND AQUILA:

Aquila was a native of Pontus, a large district of Asia Minor, who had previously come from Italy with his wife Priscilla. They had fled Rome when Emperor Claudius commanded all Jews to leave the city. Alongside his wife, Aquila was a tentmaker by trade. Paul, who too was a tentmaker, first crossed paths with Aquila and Priscilla when they hosted him in the city of Corinth. It is not clear when Aquila first believed in Jesus, but a few verses into chapter 18, it appeared that both Priscilla and Aquila had become believers. Aquila and Priscilla then accompanied Paul when he left Corinth for Ephesus. It is evident that Aquila and Priscilla were diligent students of the word when they explained the way of God to Apollos.

Priscilla and Aquila eventually moved back to Rome, in about AD 56, presumably once Claudius had passed away. They had hardly settled in before there was a church meeting in their home. In Corinth, Ephesus and Rome, they hosted the church in their home, serving the Lord faithfully. Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned for the last time in the New Testament in Paul's letter to Timothy. They were with Timothy in Ephesus, possibly having left Rome again; this time to escape the persecution sparked by Emperor Nero.

## **APOLLLOS:**

Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria (in Egypt) described as eloquent, mighty in the scriptures, fervent in spirit and instructed in the way of the Lord. In A.D 54, he arrived in Ephesus where he taught boldly in the synagogue. However; Apollos' understanding of the gospel was incomplete as he was only acquainted with the baptism of John. This probably meant that Apollos preached repentance and faith in the Messiah, but he did not know the full magnitude of Jesus' death and resurrection. It was only when Priscilla and Aquila taught him more accurately that he understood the full measure of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Apollos continued to preach and was used by God as an effective apologist for the gospel. Apollos travelled through Achaia and eventually arrived in Corinth, where he watered what Paul had sown (1 Corinthians 3:6). Apollos had natural leadership gifts that attracted a following among the church in Corinth, but simple admiration grew into divisiveness, against Apollo's' wishes. This led to a faction in Corinth, which Paul sought to correct in his letter to the Corinthians. The last mention of Apollos in the Bible comes in Paul's letter to Titus, where he asks Titus to do everything he can to help Apollos on his way through Crete.

## **TIMOTHY:**

Timothy was a Galatian, who met Paul when he was a teenager. Timothy's mother and grandmother were faithful Jewish women who taught the Old Testament to him. Paul thought of Timothy not only as a faithful friend but also as his spiritual son.

Timothy was invited by Paul to join him on his travels after his second journey through Lystra. Timothy then went on to help Paul establish the churches at Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. During the 3 years Paul was ministering in Ephesus, Timothy laboured alongside him. Once Paul went on from Ephesus, he entrusted to Timothy the responsibility to teach truth to the church and gave him the authority to order worship and appoint elders and deacons. The letter of 1 Timothy was received by Timothy whilst he was an elder in Ephesus.

## 12. BACKGROUND TO THE CITY AND PEOPLE OF EPHEBUS

Ephesus was a city that was powerfully and extraordinarily transformed by the gospel in Acts 18-20. But, what do we know about Ephesus? What is its story? Who were its people? Why did Paul choose to go there? Surely this city and its people had some strategic value to the advancement of the gospel that justified Paul's three year stay there?

Theologians, historians and Bible scholars all seem to agree that Ephesus was indeed a strategic, powerful, influential and central city, chosen by Paul very intentionally. It was an urban centre - the leading city in the massive province of Asia (which was the leading province of the East) with very influential leaders. It was a trading port - a metropolitan centre with huge economic value. It had a large population, estimated between 250 000 and 500 000 people. Furthermore, not only was it a commercial and political hub, Ephesus was a massive religious centre too. Paul would have chosen to go to Ephesus because it contained a synagogue. As per Paul's usual pattern in Corinth and elsewhere, he begins his ministry by preaching in the synagogue and reasoning with the Jews about the coming of the Messiah. Only once being rejected by the Jews does Paul turn his attention to the public preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul preached in the Hall of Tyrannus every day for about two years. Acts 19:10 tells us that this extended, daily preaching in that particular hall, in this particular city resulted in all the residents of Asia hearing the word of God! All the Jews and the Greeks in this leading province heard the gospel!

How did the gospel spread so far, so fast? Well, this is thanks to the nature of the city of Ephesus. As a major city and more importantly, a trading port, those who heard and accepted the gospel in Ephesus would have taken the message with them to the surrounding areas and their hometowns. The church in Ephesus became a base church, with strategic value, and as a result, the gospel spread throughout the entire province of Asia.

But, the gospel did not go unrefuted in Ephesus, as we clearly see in Acts 19:21-41. There were two main sources of opposition to the gospel. Firstly, was the worship of Artemis - a many-breasted ancient Greek goddess, linked with fertility and virginity. The temple of Artemis (which contained the name-bearer's statue) was massive - four times the size of the Pantheon in Athens - and is named as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was 18m high, built with over 100 pillars - one of the largest temples in the world at the time. This was one of the most important features of ancient Ephesus. The Ephesians very proudly worshipped Artemis and were honoured to house her temple in their city. In Acts 19, rioters shout "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for a few hours! A threat to Artemis (as Christianity and the gospel was) was a threat to the very essence of the city of Ephesus and its people.

Second, was the presence of witchcraft and occultism in Ephesus. It was a city full of wicked, evil powers. It was a centre for magical arts and practices. It is obviously

inevitable that these sinful practices would clash with the gospel. And indeed they did. The gospel ends up taking root so deeply in Ephesus that occultism comes into disrepute and the new Christians decide to burn their magic books. The entire socio-economic culture and climate of the city is radically changed. People such as Demetrius, who used to be profiting from people's sinful practices and idol-worship, were now losing income because so many of the people of Ephesus had turned from their sinful ways.

Essentially, Ephesus was an urban city, originally filled with idol-worship and witchcraft, but radically changed by the gospel! Let's pray that the same would be true for our wonderful city of Cape Town.

## **13. EXTRACTS FROM ACTS 18-20 (ESV)**

### **CHAPTER 18V18 TO CHAPTER 20V1**

After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. But on taking leave of them he said, "I will return to you if God wills," and he set sail from Ephesus. When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all.

And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and

persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?"

And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."

When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.



Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls.

Let them bring charges against one another. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly. After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

## **OMITTED: CHAPTER 20V2-16**

### **CHAPTER 20V17-38**

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own

blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.



## **14. ATTRIBUTES OF GOD IN ACTS 18-20**

- God's Sovereignty - His ultimate control - Acts 18v21
- God's Election and Grace - Ability to believe is a gift from God - Acts 18v27
- God's Empowering through the Holy Spirit - Acts 19v6-8
- God's Kingship - Acts 19v8
- God's Active Power Through Miracles - Acts 19v11
- God's Providence - Provision and protection through circumstance - Acts 19v30-41
- God's Guidance Through the Voice of the Spirit - Acts 20v23
- God's Knowledge of the Future - Acts 20v23
- God's Appointment of Church Leaders - Acts 20v28
- God's Ownership of the Church - Acts 20v28
- God's Word - Which builds up and gives us inheritance - Acts 20v32

## **15) MID-YEAR VAC DEVOTIONAL: ACTS 18-20 (KYLE PETERS)**

This is a verse-by-verse missional and devotional commentary through the various passages relating to the church in Ephesus in the book of Acts. We will camp out in a section for a few days, highlighting different aspects of that passage each day. Our suggestion is that every day you read the entire section, so you remember the flow of the story, and then spend some time considering the more specific thoughts that we highlight for that day. We've also included a few lines for you to jot down your own thoughts and convictions, at the end of each day.



## DAY 2 - READ ACTS 18V18-23

*v18b - "At Cenchreae he had cut his hair for he was under a vow."*

Cenchreae was Corinth's main harbour and access to the Aegean Sea. Many scholars including Michael Eaton and John Stott believe this to be a Nazarite vow (see Numbers 6) which some Hebrews took, and which was connected to expressing thanksgiving or seeking future blessing. From the rest of Paul's journeys and writings, we know that he would not have seen this vow as something that Christians had to do.

He was free from Jewish (and all) religious ceremonies that seek to win favour with God because of the free gift of salvation in the person and work of Jesus. He most likely did it for a contextual purpose, in order to win favour with a group of people, so that he could get access to share his faith - a pattern he clearly teaches in 1 Corinthians 9. This was a common practice of Paul's (see him circumcising Timothy in Acts 16) and he was probably doing this to soothe and appease the Jewish leaders he would see in Jerusalem on his way to Antioch.

Years later, in Acts 21v23, James and the elders in Jerusalem command Paul to take four men, who are currently under a vow, to shave their heads and purify themselves. Paul goes to the temple with them, so that people will not accuse him of disregarding Jewish practices. He did this for his protection against hostile Jews. We must learn to switch cultures for the sake of mission. Our own cultural identity is not our primary identity. We are Christ-followers first.

Our cultures can be used, capitalized, and thrown aside at times, in order to reach people with the gospel. There are times when Paul claims his Jewish culture (like here) in order to more easily reach Jews. At other times he clearly plays his Roman citizenship card in order to have his life spared and get an audience with Caesar. When he is in Athens, instead of using the Jewish Scriptures as a starting point, he begins talking to the Greek Philosophers by quoting their own poets.

We must not place our own culture above our identity as Christ-followers; that would be to make an idol out of our culture, which would be sin. We must celebrate our culture when we can, but we must also not be afraid to switch cultures in order to reach people with the gospel. Missionaries need to learn to shed their own culture when they are bringing the gospel to people who are, culturally, not like them.

The gospel is timeless, but minor codes of behaviour are linked to our culture and we must always be aware of our own culture that can sometimes be a barrier to people receiving the gospel. Our food, language, music and illustrations can sometimes be a barrier to reaching people who think that, if they accept the gospel, they need to also accept your entire culture. We must become "all things, to all people, that by all means [we] might save some" - 1 Corinthians 9v22.



## DAY 3 - READ ACTS 18V18-23

v19 - *“And they came to Ephesus,”*

This is the first time Paul has set foot in this city. Ephesus had a population of over two hundred thousand people; some even estimate up to half a million. It was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia and had political and commercial significance. In particular Ephesus was a massive religious centre, with synagogues, a Roman Emperor Cult and most famously, the Temple to the Goddess Artemis.

*“And he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.”*

Paul leaves Priscilla and Aquila, who must have set up shop in Ephesus for the foreseeable future, until they eventually move to Rome years later. (Paul greets them in his letter to the Romans.) Paul now continues his usual apostolic ministry pattern by first heading to the synagogue to reason with the Jews about Jesus being the Messiah. He would start with the Jews because they already had some prior knowledge of the God he was talking about from the Old Testament scriptures.

The Gospel is a city's most vital and pressing need. It is the first thing that Paul addresses in every city including Ephesus; Luke, the author of Acts, makes a clear point by recording it. Notice, Paul does not go in and start a school, or a feeding program for the poor, although these are all good things. Social justice is not his immediate priority; it is a bi-product. He goes in and proclaims the message of Jesus as the means of salvation. We can track this pattern from Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 3 and 4), Stephen (Acts 7), Philip in Samaria (Acts 8), and then Paul from Acts 9 to 18 in Damascus, Jerusalem, all the cities on Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth and then Ephesus.

The gospel transforms hearts and brings together transformed, Christ-like people in local churches where they continue to proclaim the gospel in word, and display the love of God in deed. These witnesses eventually show the city around them a different way to live. To transform a city, you need transformed people first! When you walk into a dark room and see the light is off, you don't go to the light bulb and tap on it to get the light on. You go to the switch on the wall, and press that. It is the same with personal and societal change.

The gospel is the switch on the wall; we need to press on it in order for power to flow into people and a light to come on that changes everything. As Christ-followers, we are called to do good deeds and love people, and we must not forsake this at all, but these are not uniquely Christian actions and will not usher in lasting change socially or eternal change personally - only changed hearts will.











## DAY 7 - READ ACTS 18V24-28

v24-25 - *“Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the scriptures.”*

This verse provides a great introduction to the person of Apollos who now arrives on the scene. We learn that he was a Jew from Alexandria - a city of Egypt, which at this point was a Roman province. The city was named after Alexander the Great. It had great Egyptian and Hellenistic culture and thought, but also contained the largest amount of city-dwelling Jews.

This is the city where the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) was written two hundred years previously. Apollos was a good speaker (far better than Paul) as well as being very learned and intelligent. It is for these reasons that the Greeks in Corinth (who praise worldly wisdom, eloquent communicators and the latest progressive ideas) would later love him! Luke makes note of this. Apollos also knew his Old Testament fairly well.

*“He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And, being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John.”*

This verse and the story that takes place in the first few verses of Chapter 19 are very much linked in my mind. Bible commentator Michael Eaton thinks similarly, but we will focus on that when we get to those verses. Apollos was a Christ-follower for several reasons. Firstly, it is clear that he knew the way of the Lord (Jesus) because he had been instructed in it. In Acts, the phrase “The Way” always refers to Jesus (the way of salvation) and to Christians (Acts 9, 16, 19, 24,).

Secondly, it says explicitly that he spoke accurately the things concerning Jesus - there was no error in what he taught. He was not preaching something that would not lead people to salvation. A possible third reason, is that we are not told of him believing in Jesus, repenting or being baptised here. It seems like Luke takes it for granted that Apollos is saved. He was passionate about “the way” and he taught what he knew very well to those who would listen. Luke does admit though that there is a deficiency in what he taught. We learn this from the phrases “though he only knew the baptism of John” and from the fact that Priscilla and Aquilla “explain to him the way of God more accurately”.

He was therefore definitely deficient in the area of water baptism in the name of Jesus, but what else? Eaton (and others) make the case that he was not aware of the Post-Pentecost blessing of the empowering and outpouring of the Spirit on a believer. We see this in the next chapter (Acts 19v1-9). Eaton thinks these two back-to-back stories are both making the same point about people needing the full blessing of power from an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Eaton explains that often in Hebrew writings, two stories like this would make the same point but wouldn't include all the details in both stories. Historical commentator William Ramsay finds the inclusion of the second







## DAY 10 - READ ACTS 18V24-28

v27a - *“And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him.”*

Apollos now wants to go to Achaia. Achaia is the region of Greece where Corinth was situated and that is where he ends up going. The Christ-followers in Ephesus encouraged him to do this and even wrote to the disciples in Corinth to welcome him. Priscilla and Aquila were probably involved in this writing because they had been a part of the Corinthian church for a year and half; since it's founding. Note as well the fact that relationships and partnerships are key.

People are always working in teams and connecting people. A spirit of family/friendship is huge among ministers of the gospel, which we all are. It is great that the Christians in Ephesus don't sit on the gift of a great preacher but excitedly encourage him to move on to another mission field to spread the word. They are not selfish. They do not hog Apollos for themselves. This is why we send our best leaders to go and plant new small groups, new congregations and even new churches in other countries like Madagascar!

- Are you encouraging others to “go” for the sake of the gospel?
- Are you preparing yourself to perhaps be part of a small group or church plant?
- Are you aware any gospel advancements coming up - small groups, congregations or church plants? Pray for them. If you are not aware of any, then ask God to continue raising up new leaders and multiplying the ministry of the gospel. Pray for multiplication.

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## DAY 11 - READ ACTS 18V24-28

v27b-28 - *“When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted to the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.”*

When he arrived he got straight to God's work and we see again the priority of proclaiming the Gospel for pastors and preachers. Here, we also see Luke's doctrine



of election and salvation coming through. He says that people were believing through grace. It was only because of grace that people were believing. You cannot believe without the grace of God allowing you to. This is similar to what Luke writes in Acts 13v48 when he says that all those who had been appointed to eternal life (first), believed (second). It follows the doctrine that Paul has when he writes back to the Ephesians later, telling the Christ-followers that they were chosen in Jesus before the foundation of the world (Eph 1).

Luke tells us that Apollos was very fruitful here; helping those who already believed, as well as winning more people. It's double impact - helping Christians and reaching unsaved people. Paul talks about this in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans, amongst whom he's going to preach the gospel, hoping to encourage them (the believers) as well as to reap a harvest among unsaved people. It is this work here that Paul references in his first letter to the Corinthians, when he says that he (Paul) planted (planted the church and saw the initial salvations) and Apollos watered (helped them greatly grow in Christ and in confidence in their faith that Jesus was the Christ).

This text also shows us how Apollos did it and by what method he greatly helped them - it was public proclamation from the scriptures! He did it boldly and in public. We also see here that Luke makes a point of mentioning the power that now accompanied Apollos' preaching. Eaton believes that this story is showing the same thing as the upcoming story in chapter 19; that Apollos was saved but initially lacked the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, until he met Priscilla and Aquila. I am inclined to agree. Lastly, note that at this point, both Paul and Apollos are still focusing their attention on the Jews, as per the customary pattern. It is not until the next chapter that they turn to the gentiles of Ephesus when (as was often the case) the Jews got angry.

- When was the last time you thanked God for His saving grace that you did not deserve? Thank God that while you were dead and helpless in your sin, He saved you! Thank God that He is saving sinners and maturing Christians! Repent of any areas in your life that are not as they should be. Ask God for grace here and ask Him to empower you to walk in obedience.
- Pray for any unbelieving friends and why not note down some names and invite them to church to come and hear the proclamation of the gospel?

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## DAY 12 - READ ACTS 19V1-9

The first 7 verses of Acts 19 have proved to be a divisive passage amongst Christians regarding the baptism/outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For more detailed reasoning and argumentation please head over to the Tough Questions section on page ???, where we address this issue in a more detailed commentary.

For the purpose of this devotional commentary, we take the position that tongues is not always proof of being baptised in the Spirit. But rather, that being baptised in the Holy Spirit is a conscious experience of power that is distinct from conversion, though they can, and often do, happen close together.

*v1 - "And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus."*

Whilst Paul was in Antioch and then making his way through Galatia strengthening churches, Apollos was in Ephesus. Then, sometime after Apollos had left Ephesus and been in Corinth, Paul arrived back in Ephesus. This is probably taking place in late A.D. 53 or early A.D. 54.

*"There he found some disciples."*

Paul doesn't seem to have touched base with Priscilla and Aquila again just yet and we don't hear of them again in Acts. By the time we reach Acts 20v1-3 they would have already left Ephesus and made their way back to Rome because Paul greets them in his letter to the Romans, which he wrote at that point. Another interesting thing to note here is the choice of words. Luke tells us that he "found some disciples". Although some believe these are only disciples of John the Baptist and are therefore unsaved, unregenerate people, I am persuaded otherwise for several reasons. Firstly, in the book of Acts, the word disciple virtually means Christian.

If you've read all 27 uses of the word in the book you should have no doubt that the word implies that these people are justified, born-again believers. There is only one instance out of the 27 where the word is used differently and Luke explicitly notes that the people being referred to are disciples of Paul (Acts 9v25). In his gospel, Luke also explicitly states when people are disciples of John and not Jesus (Luke 5v33). A second reason I give for this, is that Apollos also "only knew the baptism of John" and yet we are clearly meant to understand that he was a believer who taught accurately the things concerning Jesus. The fact that these disciples also only knew John's baptism [v3] cannot be used against them. These are unusual disciples, clearly lacking something (as we shall soon learn), but they are believers nonetheless.

Another point to notice here would be this: The verse doesn't say that he came to the church, as we often find elsewhere. Unlike some other places in Acts, this seems to be a group of disciples that are not necessarily considered the church in Ephesus yet. When Paul does refer to the church in Ephesus, he is summoning the Elders which he had appointed in his three years there. Earlier in Acts we learn that the Apostles



## DAY 13 - READ ACTS 19V1-9

v2-7 - *"And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all."*

There are a few interesting things to be observed in this passage. Firstly, these are potentially disciples converted by Apollos before Priscilla and Aquila explained things to him more accurately. I say this because these disciples seem to have a similar knowledge to Apollos, before his encounter with them. The next thing to note is that Paul has not assumed that simply because they are disciples and that they are believers, that they have received the Holy Spirit. If he did assume this, he would not have asked the question. Michael Eaton gives the example of someone asking if you went to Paris when you went to France.

The question implies that the asker knows you went to France, but also wants to know if you went to Paris, because you can go to France without going to Paris. This links up to the pattern we have seen; that people can believe (the 12 apostles and 120 disciples before Pentecost) before they receive the Holy Spirit (at Pentecost, as well as in Acts 8 in Samaria). Jesus said to his already believing disciples that they would receive power when they get baptised in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1v5, 8).

The disciples then respond to the question and it is an interesting response. This probably doesn't mean that they don't know about the existence of the Holy Spirit at all, because even if these disciples identified themselves strongly with John the Baptist, one of John's main teachings was that "[the messiah] will baptize with the Holy Spirit". They are probably unsure of whether or not the promise has been fulfilled - they are unaware of the post-Pentecost experience of the Spirit.

Paul continues to question because he is curious about the lack of the Holy Spirit's power - the story ends and climaxes not just with some people believing in Jesus, but with them being baptised with the Holy Spirit and displaying marks of power, as mentioned earlier. Michael Eaton's belief is that this story and the earlier story of Apollos are side-by-side to make the point that neither Apollos nor these disciples were living at a post-Pentecost level of power.

These disciples are potentially functioning like Old Testament believers - they are trusting in the coming Messiah but don't know that Jesus of Nazareth, specifically, is Him. Paul explains that the baptism they received is one of declaring repentance and trusting in the Messiah for salvation but that the Messiah has now come and it's Jesus.



## DAY 14 - READ ACTS 19V1-9

v8-9 - *“And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.”*

Paul, empowered by the Holy Spirit, gets back to his usual strategy of preaching in synagogues as his first method in church-planting. Once again we see that bold proclamation is the primary method of communicating the gospel, but this bold proclamation is done in a way that is reasoned and persuasive, which I take to mean that he was clear, and that he built reasonable arguments from the scriptures for people to follow and be persuaded by. John Stott reckons there were also times of dialogue.

*“But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.”*

Luke now tells us that as he was continuing to preach, some of the Jews really did not want to repent and believe, and they continued not believing and even actively speaking out against Paul and Christianity, painting them as evil. Paul decided that it was time to move and, as was his custom, moved to a location where he could preach to gentiles. In Ephesus, it was the Hall of Tyrannus. Tyrannus seems to have potentially been a Greek philosopher and teacher. He took the disciples with him and I'm assuming these would include the twelve men whom he had laid hands on, as well as perhaps Priscilla and Aquila (if they were still there), and others.

Eaton and Ramsay believe that Paul probably utilized the hall somewhere between the hours of 11am and 4pm for this was when people would stop work, and the hall would be available for people to visit. Paul had probably won favour with Tyrannus to some degree in order to have permission to use the venue for two years. This was typical of Paul. Firstly, we know that he told Timothy that Elders should have good reputations among non-Christians, and in Acts 27 we see Paul being allowed special leave (though a prisoner) on their way to Rome because the person in charge of him liked him. We must be winsome. If we burn bridges with people we lose favour with them, we lose opportunities to be blessed by God and we lose opportunities to proclaim the Gospel.

- Do you have a good reputation with outsiders?
- Do you work to build bridges for the gospel rather than burning them?
- Are you able to reasonably articulate your faith and explain it to people who do not know God?
- Ask God to help you build strong friendships with non-Christians and ask him to help you learn to articulate your faith. Spend some time writing out your testimony of faith, as well as the reasons you have for trusting in Christ.

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## DAY 15 - READ ACTS 19V10-17

v10 - *“This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks”*

Paul preaches in the Hall of Tyrannus daily (more or less) for two years. This is probably until January A.D 56. The crazy part of this sentence is that because he preached in that particular hall, in that particular city, all the residents of Asia heard the word of God. Asia was the massive province in which Ephesus was the leading city. Places like Colossae, Troas, as well as all the cities that the churches in the book of Revelation are addressed to, can be found.

Due to it's nature as a major city and a trading port, lots of people who got saved in Ephesus would have taken the word of God back with them to the surrounding cities and towns. The church in Ephesus had now become a strategic base church, much like the church in Jerusalem and Antioch had been so far. The gospel also spread from this major city because Paul's co-workers were sent to the surrounding areas, and both Jews and Greeks were hearing it. It is for these reasons that we plant churches in major cities and it's why universities are such strategic places - people who have come from all over the globe can hear the word, believe it, and take it back with them!

- Pray for God to give you stamina to stay on mission like Paul was. Pray for all the church plants that are happening around the globe, asking God to bless our efforts to extend his kingdom. Pray for the gospel to be spread on your university campus and ask God to give you gaps to participate in it.
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## DAY 19 - READ ACTS 19V10-17

*v16-17 - "And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded."*

Demon-possessed people could potentially have bigger, supernatural physical strength. That would be the case here, unless the possessed man was in and of himself a physically ominous person. There is an excessive amount of strength on display here, if we understand that this one man overpowered seven other men, beat them and ripped their clothes off. Demon-possessed people pose a physical threat to others - in this case, non-Christians attempting to invoke the name of Christ in a demonic encounter. It's interesting to note here that the name of Jesus in and of itself did not have the power to cast out demons.

God himself needs to act. We see a clear comparison here of the power that Paul had, compared to the power these Jewish exorcists have. Paul knew God, was a son of God, and had the Holy Spirit inside of him, equipping him with power to cast out demons, do miracles and heal the sick. The sons of Sceva were powerless because they operated with no real spiritual power.

*"And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled."*

I take the word "this" in verse 17 to be referring to the entire ongoing including the genuine power of God and the very real power of demons. These incidents became known to the entire city. They were not done in a corner. These miracles were not done in a huddle of Christians for them to get excited about. They were done in the presence of unbelievers so that they would see the power, stand in awe of God and realise the magnificence of the name of Jesus.

I take the word "this" to mean all of these incidents, otherwise I struggle to understand how this individual incident - where using the name of Jesus to cast out an evil spirit, fails and the possessed man physically overpowers the exorcist - would bring about fear of God and the extolling of Jesus' name.

Surely, that incident in and of itself would create fear of the power of evil spirits and showcase some potential weakness in the name of Jesus? As it stands, all these events serve to show the reality of the spiritual battle and the power of God and to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus among all the people of the city of Ephesus.





## DAY 21 - READ ACTS 19V18-41

v21-22 - *"Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying 'After I have been there, I must also go to Rome.'"*

After these events (including lots of exorcisms, healings, salvations and converts burning their books in radical display of their obedience to Jesus), it seems like Paul felt like his work here was almost done. He decided, in partnership with the Holy Spirit, to continue his missionary journey back through Macedonia and then through Achaia (to visit Corinth), before going back to Jerusalem. He wanted to visit Corinth because he had heard some reports of the state of the church from some envoys (1 Cor 17v17). His final intention after he completes this journey is then to make his way to Rome, the capital of the Empire and the most influential city in the world.

*"And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while."*

Although Paul knew he was going to go, he decided first to send Timothy and Erastus ahead of him, while he remained where he was for just a while longer. Paul sends his first letter to the Corinthians around this time, in response to the reports that he's heard, and he notifies them that Timothy is on his way to them. We learn later that for whatever reason, Timothy was delayed and Paul met Timothy in Macedonia and they then travelled to Corinth together. Erastus was a Corinthian and was a steward - a political office of high civic status. He is mentioned in the letter to the Romans and in Paul's second letter to Timothy. In 1929, an inscription mentioning an Erastus was found near a paved area northeast of the theatre of Corinth. It has been dated to the mid-first century and reads "Erastus in return for his aedileship laid the pavement at his own expense." This is likely the same person. In his letter to the Corinthians we also learn more detail of Paul's intention to stay in Ephesus - in 1 Cor 16v9 he tells them that he "will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost for a wide door of effective gospel work has opened for [him], and there are many adversaries."

- Do you make big decisions in your life in partnership with the Holy Spirit, based on what is best for the progress of the gospel, or do you make decisions based simply on what you feel is the nicest, most comfortable thing for you?

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## DAY 22 - READ ACTS 19V18-41

v23-27 - *"About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way."*

I love the ESV... "no little disturbance"... Understatement! Basically, there was a massive disturbance concerning Christianity.

"For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.""

The massive disturbance came about because Demetrius, a leading man in his trade, gathered together everyone who was of a similar trade and told them of the danger that their businesses were in. The silver shrines were little replicas of the Temple of Artemis that were used as home altars or as little offerings, presented to the goddess at the temple.

The first thing to notice is that the gospel has spread not only in Ephesus, but into almost all of the province of Asia (probably mostly due to the proclamation of Jesus in this strategic city). Next, we notice the subtle language of repentance that Demetrius uses to explain what has been happening in Asia - he says that people have been persuaded by Paul and have turned away from gods made by hands. People have changed their minds and walked away from them! Then, we learn that the social reforms due to the deep roots of the gospel have caused an outrage as people's livelihoods became threatened. This is the pattern of how the gospel transforms society - it takes root in the hearts and minds of individuals, and then more individuals are changed until the number of Christians in a city or nation rises, and the cultural tide eventually shifts.

There are a few interesting things to note in Demetrius' speech. First is the value that these men place on their livelihood. They have no interest in the God of the Bible; they are simply concerned with their own lives and livelihoods. These little gods are their gods, because they depend on them for provision, and when these little gods are attacked, the silversmiths and other traders take it very personally.

The same is true today: Most people in our world do not know the God of the Bible, do not have a worldview that incorporates Jesus and they worship their jobs and careers because they are the gods that provide financial gain and purpose. He has struck a chord with them and appealed to the thing that bring them most security and value - their trade. Then, he also appeals to their faith in Artemis, and shows that she may go





Demetrius' words struck a chord because the things of supreme value to them were under threat! The response to our idols being attacked is often fear and anger! This mob now got stirred up into a frenzy (anger in a group can often turn into mass hysteria and confusion) and they grabbed two known associates of Paul. This is the first we hear of Gaius, from Macedonia. He is probably not the same Gaius who travels with Paul in the next chapter because Luke makes the point of saying that guy is from Derbe (not in Macedonia).

He could be the Gaius to whom 3 John is written (because that would have been in and around Ephesus). Aristarchus is a Thessalonian who is with Paul later in Acts 27 aboard the ship en route to Rome (at least in the beginning leg of the voyage). They both probably got saved when Paul visited their respective cities previously. Both of them have potentially been with Paul in Ephesus for a while, either coming with him when he arrived, or joining later. The crowd drags these two into the great theatre. Paul, who loves these guys and is worried for them, tries to get into the crowd to help his friends. The faith of these brothers runs deep. The bonds of deep-rooted belief and friendship result in risking one's life to help other believers who are in danger because of their faith.

Some disciples stop Paul, and the Asiarchs can also see the danger and know that Paul himself probably has an even bigger target on his head than Gaius and Aristarchus do. What's interesting here is that the Asiarchs were not Christ-followers at all. In fact, they were the heads of the imperial, political-religious organisation of the province in charge of the worship of Rome and the Emperors. Once again, we see Paul having good and trusted friends, outside the church community, who cared for his life.

- Do you have great friendships with Christ-followers who would be willing to lay down their lives for you, and vice versa?
- If not, ask yourself some challenging questions: Are you pushing into community?
- Do you have a genuine love for fellow Christians?
- Are you genuine about your love for Christ and His mission, so others can truly know you are a brother or sister in Christ?
- Prayerfully take your answers to God and ask Him what you should do.

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## DAY 24 - READ ACTS 19V18-41

v32 - *“Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together.”*

This is a great example of how a lack of godliness results in chaos. These people are acting out of anger. Self-preservation is the biggest thing on their mind. Worshipping idols is a cause they want to fight for. This all leads to chaos, where people are gathered together in an uproar, but are not even sure why they are there. This happens often in riots. Let's notice though how each of the things that have led up to this are the antithesis of the teachings of Christ and the way of the Holy Spirit. Let's learn some lessons here about crowd mentality for when we are tempted to be caught up in them, even if it's more slow burning (over time) and less personal (on social media).

Firstly, these people are zealous for their false gods, not for Jesus. They have not loved the Lord; they have loved created things.

Secondly, these people are angry, and anger does not lead to self-control or a sound mind. A lack of peace and trust in God leads to anger and fear. A peaceful spirit and self-control stems from deep rest in the fact that your ultimate need has been taken care of and that you have a hope beyond this world.

Thirdly, self-centred thoughts of self-preservation has led people to treat others, who threaten their security, with great contempt and hatred. They do not know the love of God and therefore cannot love their neighbours as themselves, or love their enemies.

These reactions are all linked - they flow from one another, and are ultimately all rooted in selfish pride, instead of God-focused humility which leads to life. Ultimately, lots of people don't even know why they are there; they are just filled with rage and need an outlet for their frustration that has nothing to do with God and all to do with themselves.

This whole story is great confirmation of Paul's teaching concerning the sinfulness of humanity. We live in an age of sin and those who don't know Christ are under the dominion of darkness.

Demetrius' hatred of the gospel is Satanic blindness, and the frenzied crowd is a part of the unconscious way that men and women obey the spiritual powers that domineer them.

- Are you ever tempted to be caught up in crowds or conversations (in person or online) that are actually rooted in anger, fear, pride and self-preservation rather than peace, trust in God, and God-focused humility?
- Ask God to give you discernment when engaging in social topics. Ask Him to birth in you a heart that produces the fruit of the Spirit, so that you can trust Him and be humble before Him.

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## DAY 25 - READ ACTS 19V18-41

v33-37 - *“Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!””*

The crowd now seems to die down to a level where some people regain some order. A mixed crowd ask Alexander to say something. Alexander is most likely one of the unconverted Jews from the synagogue in Ephesus, who was stubborn and spoke evil against Christianity earlier in this chapter. He may also be the same Alexander who was a bronze-worker and caused Paul much harm (2 Tim4v14). Although there was unity in this crowd against Christianity and against Paul, there was much diversity under the surface, with the Artemis-worshipping Ephesians not wanting the Jews to speak or be represented.

Pride and love of self-interest can again be seen here in this mob. To the Artemis-worshipping Ephesians, Paul and his message is probably too closely linked to Judaism, and these people are zealously and violently opposing any God of the Jews or Christians. At this point, Christianity was still viewed, to outsiders, as basically a sect of Judaism. It is unclear what Alexander wanted to say. The text says that the Jews wanted him to make a defence - perhaps that the message of the gospel was not linked to the Jews of the synagogue in Ephesus. Based on their two hours of chanting, we see clearly the biggest motivation of the majority of the crowd - they did not want their idols and religion to fall.

*“And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, ‘Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess.’”*

The town clerk was the elected head of the city officials, almost like a mayor. After two hours of chanting, he eventually gets the crowd’s attention and speaks to them.



## DAY 26 - READ ACTS 19V18-41

v38-Ch20v1 - *“If therefore Demetrius and the craftsman with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion. And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly. After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.”*

The town clerk finishes his speech. He tells Demetrius and the craftsmen (who are worried about the future of their businesses) that if they have a complaint, they must go through the correct channels. After a quick warning he then dismisses them. William Ramsay reckons that Luke included this story here to show that Christianity was not anti-state. Michael Eaton also believes that this story gives us an example of how Christians are to relate to the state.

God puts governments in place to care for and protect people. Generally, civil disobedience is disobedience to God (Rom 13v2). Rulers are not meant to be a terror. Paul was relating to the state authorities in a way that won respect. They felt that Paul and the Christians were not against the state and wanted to be good citizens. Jesus was the first to teach this when He told His followers to give to God the things that are God’s and give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. Christ-followers should see government as God’s ordinance for the well-being of the world and work towards building it and being subject to it. We should have respect for the state.

After this, Paul gathers the disciples in Ephesus and encourages them. Then he says goodbye and leaves for Macedonia. It looks as though Aristarchus went with him; probably because his life would be in danger in Ephesus.

- What are your thoughts and feelings towards the state?
- Do you actively work with them or against them?
- Would your government think you are for them or against them?
- How can you honour God better and be a better citizen of your country?

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## DAY 29 - READ ACTS 20V17-31

v22-25 - *"And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again."*

Paul now changes the direction of his talk. He tells them that, by the will and direction of the Holy Spirit, he is going to Jerusalem. Next, he is saying one of two things: Either he is saying that, as usual, the Spirit is testifying to him that possible imprisonment awaits him, or, it is a specific word from the Spirit saying that specifically in Jerusalem, imprisonment and afflictions await him (which we know is true and comes to pass). Either way we see that the Holy Spirit can lead us into dangerous and uncomfortable situations. Someone once said that the Holy Spirit comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. Expect the Holy Spirit to push you out of your comfort zone, but to be there with you in the midst of it.

He then shares with the elders one of the great perspectives that governs his life - he does not count his life as valuable to him. All he cares about is completing the work that Jesus has called him to, which is to tell people about the good news of the grace of God. We have all been given general work to do by God that we can get on with, but as we walk with Him, He will slowly reveal to us, more specifically, where and how He wants to use us.

Finally, Paul slightly changes direction again and announces that he does not intend to come back, or is at least unsure about his return. He reckons they probably won't meet again.

- Are you prepared to die for your faith like Paul?
- Are you willing to follow the Holy Spirit wherever He may call you?
- Have you asked God for any specific guidance around your ministry calling?
- Ask God to speak to you and guide you.
- Ask Him to help you get on with His general will, whilst He guides you step-by-step into His specific will for your life. This is a day-by-day journey.

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## DAY 31 - READ ACTS 20V17-31

v28-31 - *"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made your overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."*

Paul then gives the elders a stern charge and warning. They must pay close attention to themselves first. This is similar to what he tells Timothy (who is also in Ephesus later) - to watch his own life and doctrine. Then he tells them to pay careful attention to the flock as well. They have to know what conversations the sheep are having behind closed doors.

They need to know when there is a new person in the sheep fold. They need to have their ear to the ground and their eyes on scripture. God has made them overseers - they have authority from Him, over the church that He obtained with the blood of Jesus, mentioned here as His own blood - God's own blood. In these verses we see that elders are also referred to as pastors/shepherds and overseers. All these titles are interchangeable but hint at various functions of the office - to care for people, to lead people, and to have general oversight.

*"I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."*

Essentially, Paul prophesies that after he leaves, false teachers will come into the leadership of the church, and will arise out of the very group that he is now speaking to. The fierce wolves that Paul tells the Ephesian elders about are probably the same false teachers that John is dealing with in his letters later down the line. Notice what Paul says the false teachers will do - they will draw disciples after themselves.

People are like sheep - we have a tendency to move together and to wander off and get into difficulties. We are always in need of shepherdly guidance. Although these are words to elders, we can and should learn from them. We should pay attention to what we believe and how we live. We should help our elders in protecting and nurturing our fellow sheep. We should humble ourselves and entrust our lives to Godly leaders who have been given to us as gifts from God to shepherd and care for our lives.

*"Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears."*

Paul asks them one more time to be vigilant - to pay attention and be actively alert and on the lookout for wolves among the sheep. He tells them to do this whilst also remembering how for three years, he was with them, labouring and teaching as often as he could, with compassion and genuine love in his heart for them.





## DAY 33 - READ ACTS 20V32-38

v33-35 - *"I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel."*

Paul changes gear again; now to give them some more practical life wisdom before he leaves. This life wisdom is Godly, based off Jesus' words.

*"You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me."*

Paul reminds them that by the work of his own hands (tent-making), he provided for himself, his team and those around him. In saying this he is also reminding them that he was not after their money. Fake ministers are always identifiable by their love of money.

*"In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

These words of Jesus are not actually recorded in the gospels, but no doubt carry the clear heart of biblical teaching. They are probably some of the many things that Jesus said that were not recorded - they were probably passed to Paul by those who heard Jesus preach. Paul says that, in all areas of life, by his working hard and providing for his own needs and those around him, he has demonstrated the fact that Christians are called to help the weak. He has not been lazy - God despises idleness.

By working hard and being generous to those who have less than ourselves, we are remembering the words of Jesus; that it is more blessed to give than to receive. We experience that reality. We will experience the blessing both now and in heaven, when we put into practice the teachings of Jesus. We should chase blessing and the experience of joy, by being generous with what we have!

- Are you a hard worker with the skills God has given you, or are you lazy?
- Are you generous with what God has given you?
- Can you testify to Jesus' words; that it really is more blessed to give than to receive?
- What might be holding you back from being generous? - Perhaps you don't really believe it will be joyful?

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## DAY 35 - READ ACTS 20V32-38

v37-38 - *"And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship."*

And now to the final moments of Paul and the Ephesians: We are not sure if he ever sets foot here again. He writes a letter to them, and there is a possibility that after Acts 28 he does make a final trip to Ephesus, but there's nothing in scripture. In Paul's mind at this point, he is not coming back. Paul has a deep friendship with these elders, which we see from the fact that they prayed together, hugged and cried over the fact that they would not see each other again.

The point I want to highlight is this: Why did he leave if it was so sad? He left because the mission of God was bigger than their friendship. Here, Jesus' words about leaving friends and family for Him are being lived out by the Apostle Paul. Thank goodness the twelve apostles didn't hang out together in Jerusalem until they died of old age. Thank goodness they went on mission to the ends of the earth and now, two thousand years later, the gospel is still bearing fruit. As much as he loves these guys, he knows that God is with them, he's taught them all he could, they have the word of God and the power of the Spirit, and now he must continue to spread the word. He knows he will see them again in heaven and have a never-ending amount of time to be with them again. For now, there is a mission to get on with. That is Christian friendship in light of eternity!

- Do you have this view of life and friendship?  
If not, why not?
- Do you perhaps not believe in the reality of heaven?
- Do you perhaps not believe in the urgent need for people to hear the gospel?
- Ask God to give you a right perspective of friendship and life on earth - one that is radically centred around Him and the reality of the gospel.

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## 16) ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS IN ACTS 19 (KYLE PETERS)

Are the disciples that Paul meets in the beginning of Acts 19 actually Christians? Did they get baptised twice? Is the baptism of the Holy Spirit given once at conversion or is it a subsequent experience that can happen multiple times in the life of a Christian?

The first seven verses of Acts 19 have proved to be a divisive passage among Christians. Typical Pentecostals use this story as a proof text for their belief that a) there is a distinction between being converted to the faith and being baptized in the Holy Spirit as a conscious experience of power, and b) that the proof of this baptism in the Holy Spirit is always tongues. In opposition to this, contemporary Protestant Evangelicals often use this story as proof that the Holy Spirit is a gift we all receive at conversion and is a one-time thing.

We believe the Pentecostals are wrong in their belief that the baptism of the Spirit must always be accompanied by tongues, but that they are very right in their first belief; that there is a distinction between being converted to the faith, and being baptised in the Holy Spirit as a conscious experience of power and assurance!

Below is a more detailed commentary on the first seven verses of Acts 19 that seeks to address many of the questions that arise from this passage. There is a lot of overlap with the devotional commentary from earlier. (This is the fuller, unedited version).

After reading this commentary, you can also find our Common Ground Church resource entitled "What We Believe about Experiencing the Spirit," which should provide further insights. We would also recommend Michael Eaton's book "Baptism with the Spirit," where he further explores these ideas throughout the Bible and church history.

We hope that this is beneficial for you in your journey and our prayer is that you would experience the fullness of the Spirit that God longs to pour out in your life!

*v1 - "And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples."*

Luke tells us that Paul found some disciples. Although some believe these are only disciples of John the Baptist and are therefore unsaved, unregenerate people, I am persuaded otherwise for several reasons. Firstly, in the book of Acts, the word disciple virtually means Christian. If you've read all 27 uses of the word in the book, you should have no doubt that the word implies that these people are justified, born-again believers. There is only one instance out of the 27 where the word is used differently, and Luke explicitly notes that the people being referred to are disciples of Paul (Acts 9v25). In his gospel, Luke also explicitly states when people are disciples of John and not Jesus (Luke 5v33).

A second reason I give for this is that Apollos also "only knew the baptism of John,"



and yet we are clearly meant to understand that he was a believer who taught accurately the things concerning Jesus. The fact that these disciples also only knew John's baptism (v3) cannot be used against them. These are unusual disciples, clearly lacking something (as we shall soon learn), but they are believers nonetheless.

*v2 - "And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"*

There are a few interesting things to be observed in this sentence: Firstly, these are potentially disciples converted by Apollos before Priscilla and Aquila explained things to him more accurately. I say this because these disciples seem to have a similar knowledge to Apollos, before his encounter with them.

The next thing to note is that Paul has not assumed that simply because they are disciples and that they are believers, that they have received the Holy Spirit. If he did assume this, he would not have asked the question. Michael Eaton gives the example of someone asking if you went to Paris when you went to France. The question implies that the asker knows you went to France, but also wants to know if you went to Paris, because you can go to France without going to Paris. This links up to the pattern we have seen; that people can believe (the 12 apostles and 120 disciples before Pentecost) before they receive the Holy Spirit (at Pentecost, as well as in Acts 8 in Samaria). Jesus said to his already believing disciples that they would receive power when they get baptised in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1v5, 8).

Other phrases that mean the same thing include being filled with the Spirit (Acts 2v4), the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2v17), the Spirit coming upon you (Acts 1v8), the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2v38) and receiving the Spirit - all these examples clearly show markings of a conscious experience of power! These are also not once-off experiences because in the first few chapters of Acts we see the same disciples experiencing the same thing more than once, and every time they are granted power and they proceed to act with boldness. Another thought that fleshes out this teaching is when we look at this text and ask why Paul asked about the Spirit.

Surely he saw a lack of evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit, which he then eventually sees at the end of the story, evidenced in tongues and prophecy. If he was really queering their salvation, he would have asked something very different. Tongues and prophecy are never linked as fruit of conversion, but fruit of a baptism of power - we can even see examples (like Saul) in the Old Testament (1 Sam 10v1). I think many theologians have made technical terms out of "receiving the Spirit," where the scriptures use it more loosely, as I mentioned earlier. The receiving of the Spirit that Paul is asking about here is not the indwelling at conversion, but the outpouring of power!

*"And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.""*

The disciples then respond to the question and it is an interesting response. This probably doesn't mean that they don't know about the existence of the Holy Spirit at all, because even if these disciples identified themselves strongly with John the Baptist,

one of John's main teachings was that "[the messiah] will baptize with the Holy Spirit". They are probably unsure of whether or not the promise has been fulfilled - they are unaware of the post-Pentecost experience of the Spirit.

v3 - *"And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?'"*

Paul continues to question because he is curious about the lack of the Holy Spirit's power. He now asks what they were baptised into. I think the motive behind this question could be read in one of two ways: Either he asks this because he wants to know if they were baptised in water in the name of Jesus, or he is asking because he wants to know if they were baptised in the Holy Spirit. This is another specific verse where scholars are divided. Scholars who do not believe in a post-conversion baptism in the Spirit use Paul's question to prove that Paul assumes a clear strong link between conversion, water baptism and receiving the Spirit - a package deal, so to speak. But I think, from all the evidence provided earlier, that Paul's motive, or the question behind his question here is, "Were you baptized in the Holy Spirit?". Either motive can be used by those of us who believe in the distinction between salvation (indwelling of the Spirit) and a baptism of the Holy Spirit.

A final reason for my belief that Paul was wondering about the lack of signs of the Holy Spirit's power is this fact: The story ends and climaxes not just with some people believing in Jesus, but with them being baptised with the Holy Spirit and displaying marks of power, as mentioned earlier. Michael Eaton's belief is that this story and the earlier story of Apollos are side-by-side to make the point that neither Apollos nor these disciples were living at a post-Pentecost level of power.

v3-5 - *"They said, 'Into John's baptism.'" And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."*

These disciples know the same baptism as Apollos, although it's possible they did not have the exact same level of understanding on every topic. Apollos knew not only John's ministry but also that of Jesus. These disciples are potentially functioning like Old Testament believers - they are trusting in the coming Messiah but don't know that Jesus of Nazareth, specifically, is Him. They are like the believers in Jesus' day, before the cross, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost.

Paul explains that the baptism they received is one of declaring repentance and trusting in the Messiah for salvation but that the Messiah has now come and it's Jesus. This is similar to Apollos in that what they knew was not wrong or incorrect; it was just deficient, and now Paul has explained the truth more accurately. They responded by being baptized in water (again, I believe), but this time in the name of Jesus with a clearer and fuller knowledge of Jesus himself.

v6-7 - *"And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were*

*about twelve men in all."*

Now Paul acts on the answer to the question he asked. He asked if they received the Spirit when they believed and they said no. He then asked them into what were they baptised and they say John's Baptism. He then clarifies the teaching about Jesus, baptises them in water in the name of Jesus and then lays hands on them, which ushers in the Holy Spirit onto them.

The immediate results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is similar to other occasions and includes both tongues and prophecy. Tongues should not be the only indicator of being baptised with the Holy Spirit. Jesus never spoke in tongues after the Spirit came on Him, and Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that not all believers speak in tongues. We can also see here the distinction between salvation (justification, new birth, regeneration) and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, because we cannot believe that salvation comes from the laying on of hands.

This receiving is more to do with assurance and gifts of the Spirit. Even if we could prove that these disciples were not saved at all when we first met them, we can still get strong support for the distinct post-conversion outpouring of the Holy Spirit from examples of separate events in Acts 2 and Acts 8 and of the specific nature of the baptism of the Spirit being connected with power and not initial salvation. We also cannot miss the direct link between this story and the fact that immediately in the next verse we read that Paul preached in the synagogue with boldness!

Michael Eaton and John Piper both say similar things about this passage in that they believe what we have here is a clear example of how to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, being God, is completely sovereign and can baptise people with power whenever He chooses (often at conversion with simple faith in Jesus), but we see here some things that are good guidelines to have in place in order to not block his outpouring. They would be:

- Explicit faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- Explicit faith in the possibility of the Holy Spirit.
- Faith is openly and publicly expressed in water-baptism.
- Prayer by someone else who has the gift of praying for the blessing of the Holy Spirit

No matter what we hold to theologically on what these verses teach, we must come to realize our need for the conscious power of the Holy Spirit - that is clear throughout the book of Acts and elsewhere in the New Testament.

## **17.) WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT EXPERIENCING THE SPIRIT IN COMMON GROUND CHURCH**

The Spirit enables us to experience God. But making sense of this experience, and finding the right biblical language can be difficult. Hopefully this simple document will help with this difficulty. There are three main concepts that need to be understood:

- 1) The indwelling of the Spirit
- 2) Baptism with the Spirit
- 3) Walking in the Spirit

### **1) THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT**

- We believe that every believer, at the moment of faith in Christ, is born of the Spirit (John 3:3,5). This is called “regeneration.” To use different language to describe the same thing, the Spirit “indwells” the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19). Regeneration and indwelling are facts to be affirmed by faith.
- For some people the moment of regeneration is something one can feel happening inside of them, but for many this is not the case. For example, think of the two ways we wake up out of a sleep. Some people slowly drift into an awake state, but cannot pinpoint the moment they transitioned from sleep to wake, whereas others – with the help of an alarm clock – can point to the exact second they woke up! Same with regeneration. The important question is not when exactly one woke up to Christ, but whether one is now awake to him. But waking up is just the start of the day. There is so much more...

### **2) BAPTISM WITH THE SPIRIT**

- Though all believers have the indwelling of the Spirit, not all believers have experienced baptism or infilling with the Spirit.
- We believe that over and above regeneration and indwelling, God wants to fill every believer with his Spirit. By this we mean that God wants to experientially immerse every believer with the presence and power of his Spirit. Another way of saying this is that God bestows upon them in the moment a heightened awareness of Christ’s nearness and power. This is called many things in the book of Acts, including “baptism in the Spirit” (Acts 1:5), the Spirit coming upon you (Acts 1:8), “being filled with the Spirit” (Acts 2:4), “the outpouring of the Spirit” (Acts 2:17), “the gift of the Spirit” (Acts 2:38) and “receiving the Spirit” (Acts 19:2).
- Some charismatic churches refer to this initial experience as “the baptism in the Spirit” and any additional experiences as “infillings by the Spirit.” We think this is unnecessarily confusing and by giving the first time a special name, it puts too much pressure on the first experience of the Spirit. Therefore we refer to every-time people experience Christ’s nearness and power as a baptism in /with the Spirit.

For some the baptism can be very dramatic, for others very gentle. But always one is conscious that it is happening, and one can remember it happening (Galatians 3:2). This is usually a wonderful experience, which Ephesians 1:18-19 describes as a foretaste of the glories of heaven. This is an experience that can be repeated again and again (See Acts 4:31, which speaks of the same believers who experienced Acts 2:1-4). Sometimes, along with this experience, God gives the gift of tongues (Acts 19:6), but many – like Jesus for example (Matthew 3:16-17) – experience Spirit baptism without any gift of tongues.

- Some believers experience regeneration by the Spirit and baptism in the Spirit on the very same day, sometimes even at the same time (Acts 10:44-46) though a time lag between the two moments is far more common (Acts 8:14-15).
- There are two main reasons God pours out his Spirit upon believers: 1) To embolden and empower us for the mission he has for us (see Acts 1:8). 2) To let us sense the deeply assuring, in-flooding of His love in our hearts (Romans 5:5) – which enables us to intimately encounter Him as “Abba Father” (Galatians 4:6).
- Two key Scriptures provide some keys to help us experience this blessing:
  - 1) John 7:37-39 reveals that one must come to Jesus, with thirst, and with faith that indeed he wants to pour out his Spirit upon you. One must then “drink” which means prayerfully engage God, all the time being ready to receive what Christ is ready to give. 2) Luke 11:9-13 shows that we must ask the Father for this experience, with the conviction that he wants what is best for us. Additionally, though this is often not needed, having Spirit- filled believers pray for us, with the laying on of hands, is a common way to experience the baptism in the Spirit (Acts 8:14-17 and 19:6).
- The question that every believer needs to answer is this: “Have you yet experienced immersion into the Spirit’s presence and power?” If not, we should be encouraged to seek God for this. He is more than ready to give it. Some of us come into this experience quickly and easy, whereas for others, for whatever reason, it can take longer. But we must refuse to divide ourselves into “haves” and “have-nots” since God loves us equally, and the baptism in the Spirit is in no way an indicator of how spiritual we are – after all, it is a free undeserved gift much the same way salvation is a free undeserved gift. Besides, the Spirit is at work in the life of every believer from the moment he indwells us – so it is not like some believers don’t have the Spirit. They do. We are united by the fact that we all have ‘one Spirit’ (Eph 4:4), with none of us in anyway being inferior or superior to other believers.

### 3) WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

- Not every believer who has experienced the baptism of the Spirit has learnt to live every day in dependence on the Spirit. It is not enough to just be baptized in the Spirit. One must think about Spirit baptism as a kind of launch or booster into a daily dependence on the Spirit, which requires some effort on our part. This daily dependence on, and submission to, the Spirit is called ‘walking in the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:16).

- Ephesians 5:18 commands all believers to 'be filled with the Spirit'. The tense used is present continuous. And it is something we're commanded to do. What does this verse mean? Though the phrase 'filled by the Spirit' as it is used in the book of Acts usually refers to a momentary baptism in the Spirit, in this verse it seems to refer to a life that is constantly lived in 'fellowship with the Spirit (2 Cor 13:14) and "in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:21).
- When we learn to live in the Spirit hour after hour and day after day, we tend to evidence more and more "the fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23) and more and more 'the gifts of the Spirit' operating through us (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). The "fruit of the Spirit" is the manifestation of Christ's character in our lives. The 'gifts of the Spirit' are the manifestation of Christ's ministry through our lives.
- An analogy helps to distinguish the Spirit baptism from walking in the Spirit. Imagine a father walking with a boy hand in hand. The boy knows the father loves him. The boy is dependent on the father, whose strength and power are available to him. That is a picture of walking in the Spirit. It is living hand in hand with the Spirit. Now imagine the father suddenly scoops up the boy off the ground, tightly embraces him and affirms his tender love for him. As wonderful as walking hand in hand with the father was, this is wonderful in a whole new way – it is the intensification of the bond between them, and of the boy's certainty that his father loves him, and is with him in strength. This is a picture of the baptism of the Spirit. Though these experiences of being scooped up by God are tantalizing, they are not sustainable – one has a life to live, and a mission to fulfill – which is best done with one's feet on the ground.

## SUMMARY

- The indwelling of the Spirit is something we believe. If we have trusted in Jesus then the Spirit now indwells or inhabits us, a fact to be affirmed by faith.
- Baptism or infilling with the Spirit is something we ask God for. This is when God bestows upon a Christian a heightened awareness of Christ's nearness and power. This is something God does. We can't self-generate this, we can merely receive it.
- Walking in the Spirit is something we do. Day after day, hour after hour, we are to depend on the Spirit, submitting to his leadings toward godliness, bearing the fruit of Christ's character, and doing the deeds he leads us to do, in the power he gives.

## 18) FURTHER STUDY

- Acts - Michael Eaton Commentary
- Ephesians - Michael Eaton Commentary
- St Paul, The Traveler and the Roman Citizen - William M. Ramsay  
Historical Commentary
- The Historical Geography of Asia Minor - William M. Ramsay
- Acts - John Stott Commentary
- "The Book of Acts" - video by The Bible Project on YouTube
- "The Book of Ephesians" - video by The Bible Project on YouTube
- Mars Hill - Ephesus - video at [vimeo.com/59684155](https://vimeo.com/59684155)
- David Guzik Commentary - [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org)
- Holy Fire - RT Kendall
- Baptism with the Spirit - Michael Eaton





## DAY 2: A BURST OF PRAISE - THE GREATNESS OF SALVATION

*Eph 1:3-14 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

- Paul mentions that we have been chosen before the foundation of the world. What does he mean by this?
- Verse 5 proclaims that in love, he predestined us for 'adoption as sons'. The term 'adoption as sons' is a legal term referring to a male who was adopted and received the full rights of a son, especially the authority and promise of an inheritance. How does this image shape the way in which we view a relationship with God the Father?
- What does this text say that we have received in Christ?
- How does this text shape the way you view the Christ follower's identity?

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## DAY 6: HOW WE SEE GOD'S POWER IN THE CHURCH

*Eph 2:11-22 - Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands - remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

- The text describes the alienation and separation between Jewish Christians and Gentiles. It is important to note that during the time this letter was written, the divide between Jews and Gentiles was deep and complex. The divide was religious, cultural and racial. Near the end of this portion of text, in verses 19-22, it describes the changed relationships between these two people groups through the power of the gospel.
- As Christians, what should our response to the law be, according to this text?
- What is the foundation of this new-found unity?
- What does this text say about we should treat our brothers and sisters in the faith?
- What does this text reveal to us about the work of the cross in the relationship between a) Jew and Gentile, b) God and Jew and c) God and Gentile?

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## DAY 7: HOW PAUL HAS A PLACE IN GOD'S PLAN

*Eph 3:1-13 - For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles - assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.*

- Paul writes as a prisoner. Why was he imprisoned?
- What is the mystery that Paul speaks about in verses 3 and 4?
- Paul mentions that his ministry is to steward the grace that has been given to him by God. How does this influence the way that we use our grace-given gifts?
- Why does Paul call himself the least of all the saints? Read 1 Tim 1:15 - Is this the same thought that Paul has in this text?
- In verse 8, Paul appears to marvel at the gospel. Take some time to think about, write down, pray or speak out loud the mystery and the marvelous truth of the gospel.
- What does Paul mean when he writes that the revelation he received 'was not made known to the sons of men in other generations'?

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## DAY 14: THE CALL TO GODLINESS - KINDNESS AND COMMON SINS

*Eph 4:30-32 - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

- What does Paul mean when he writes 'we were sealed for the day of redemption'?
- Paul is encouraging and commanding the church to treat each other in a certain way. How do the actions in verse 32 reflect the way in which Christ has treated us?

*Eph 5:1-7 - Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them;*

- When calling us to love others, Paul always seems to highlight what Christ did for us. Why does he do this?
- What would it look like to love others as Christ loved us?
- Paul again reminds Christ-followers that they are children and saints. Why does he emphasize this when he is calling us to holiness?  
In verse 5, when Paul refers to those that are sexually immoral, impure or covetous, is he referring to those who used to fall into those categories, or those who are currently partaking in these things? How would this impact the way in which we interpret this text?
- What does 'inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God' mean?
- What would 'empty words' consist of? What is Paul warning the Ephesian church of?

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## DAY 17: HUSBANDS AND WIVES

*Eph 5:22-33 - Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

- What is Paul saying when he draws a parallel between the relationship of a husband to his wife and the relationship of Christ to the church?
- How ought the church to see Christ?
- Under Christ's leadership, what should the church be like, according to verse 27?
- What does verse 28 say about the way in which a husband should love his wife?
- In verses 28-30, we can see Christ's attitude toward the church. What does this tell us about the way in which a husband should treat his wife?
- Christ has loved (and will continue to love) the church despite all its flaws and blemishes. What does this tell us about Christ's love for the church and therefore, a husband's love for his wife?
- Write down the truths in this text that lead you to worship Christ. Thank God for them.
- What are the truths in this text that you may need more clarity on? Write down some ways in which you will get more clarity on this text.

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## DAY 20: THE DEVIL AND THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR

*Eph 6:10–20 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*

- Paul has called the Ephesians to live lives that resemble their holy identity. However, he knows that there is a complication - the devil. What does Paul encourage the Ephesian church (and us) to actively do in response?
- What does this text reveal to us about the nature of the devil and his mission?
- As Christ-followers, who is our battle against, according to verse 12?
- When talking about the Christ-follower's actions, why do you think Paul uses the image of a soldier's armour?
- How can you take every part of the armour and apply it to a particular area in your life?
- What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? What does Paul suggest we pray for?
- What does verse 20 tell us about Paul's attitude towards evangelism? What could it be calling you to, in the way you declare the Gospel?

## DAY 21: CONCLUSION

*Eph 6:21–24 - So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.'*

- What is the end goal of sending Tychicus?
- How could you share things that are happening in your faith and that may encourage others?
- Paul closes out his letter in a similar way in which he opened it. He packs the last few sentences full of truths about the gospel. What are these truths?
- Write down and pray through the encouraging, challenging and exciting truths that have come out of the Ephesian letter. What do you think God is highlighting in your life, specifically, and what could you do to respond in obedience to Him?

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- As Christ-followers, who is our battle against, according to verse 12?
- When talking about the Christ-follower's actions, why do you think Paul uses the image of a soldier's armour?
- How can you take every part of the armour and apply it to a particular area in your life?
- What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? What does Paul suggest we pray for?
- What does verse 20 tell us about Paul's attitude towards evangelism? What could it be calling you to, in the way you declare the Gospel?

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THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS AS IT STANDS TODAY

## **20.) WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IN EPHEBUS? - THE POST-BIBLE CHURCH AND CITY OF EPHEBUS**

Ephesus was undeniably a magnificent, bustling city in the prime of its day. The temple of Artemis was at one point a massive, majestic structure. Rioters cried out “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” for hours in Acts 19:28. But what has happened since then? History has told us that neither the temple of Artemis nor the city of Ephesus were eternal. If you visit Ephesus today, it is a marshy city of ruins. What turned Ephesus from an urban trading port into swampy ruins?

Well, firstly, the geography of the area has changed fairly significantly. In Biblical times, Ephesus was a coastal city, with a harbour. But since then, the harbour has silted up with sediment from a nearby river, resulting in quite a dramatic change in the shoreline: Ephesus is now 8km inland. This meant that Ephesus was now far less important a city in terms of trade and urban development. It lost its strategic value. Furthermore, some of the houses in Ephesus were buried by landslides. Many Ephesians left the swampy city and relocated to the surrounding hills. Ephesus was no longer the metropolitan hub that it once had been.

And what was to come of the Temple of Artemis? This great marble temple (built in about 323 BC) was destroyed by Goths (the first Germanic people to become Christians) in 262 AD. This was the end of the temple. Demetrius’ fears of Acts 19 had come to pass. Christianity had grown dramatically, the Temple was destroyed and Artemis lost

her glory. The remains and ruins of the temple were used to supply the surrounding areas with building materials.

Legend has it that in 1100 AD a group of Crusaders arrive in Asia Minor looking for the coastal city of Ephesus. Instead, they find a small marshy village, miles from the sea, now called "Ayasalouk." There's no bustling trade or busy harbour, as they had expected. Confused, one of the crusaders approaches a local and asks whether this swampy village is in fact Ephesus. The man informs the crusader of the name change. The crusader then asks about the temple of Artemis. He wants to know where to find this magnificent temple that he has, until now, only heard about. The confusion now changes hands and the local man responds: "Temple? What temple, Sir? We have no temple here." By 1100 AD, the people living in and around this area, didn't even know that a temple had once existed.

Today all that remains of the temple is a single (reconstructed) column and an unimpressive swamp. This (once magnificent) temple has been completely forgotten about by the people and the city. Ultimately, Christianity won out against the worship of Artemis in Ephesus.

And what about the church? Ephesus is anything but a centre for Christianity today. In fact, it is now found near the town of Selçuk, in Turkey - a largely Muslim country. What happened? As Paul predicted in Acts 20:29, heresy arose in the church of Ephesus. Some Ephesians were denying that Jesus Christ actually ever came to earth in the flesh. The book of Revelation states that the church in Ephesus had lost their first love and if they didn't return to the "works they did at first" that their church would die out. Eventually, the church of Ephesus did die out because they didn't go back to their original, raw devotion to God.

Ultimately, the city of Ephesus lost its significance in more ways than one. The church perished, Artemis was completely ruined and geographical luck wasn't on their side either. How sobering a thought, that though temples, idols, cities and even churches fade away; the truth of the gospel is eternal. The gospel continues. The gospel doesn't just survive, but thrives and advances, throughout history. Across time and across cultures, the gospel - and only the gospel - is still the power of God to bring salvation. What a timeless miracle that outlasts all else!

– WRITTEN BY –

KYLE PETERS, KATE ANDERSON AND DEVLIN QUINN



common ground

**STUDENTS**