

The purpose of this leader's guide is to be a tool for ABF and Life Group leaders to follow the sermon series with their group. Our hope is that this guide will give you a head start for your study and will allow your group to respond to what they've heard and apply it for life.

Acts 18-19

Context: Chapter 18 brings us to the close of Paul's 2nd Missionary journey specifically in verse 22. One pattern or strategy we see over and over again is Paul proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews first then to the Gentiles, which is consistent with what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16. Paul closes his 2nd missionary journey in Antioch. The end of chapter 18 and throughout 19 we follow Paul's 3rd missionary journey which eventually ends in chapter 21 of Acts. Chapter 19 actually was an extended stay of over two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Paul approached Ephesus from the east, perhaps traveling by Pisidian Antioch through Phrygia into Asia and then down the Cayster Valley. A city of over a quarter million people, Ephesus controlled important land and sea routes. Thousands of pilgrims came to Ephesus yearly to honor the great goddess Artemis, whose temple stood in Ephesus. It is believed that many of the churches mentioned in Revelation 2 & 3 must have been started because of this third missionary journey. Paul extended his ministry through letter writing (1 and 2 Corinthians, possibly Romans) and by dispatching assistants by sea to the troubled church at Corinth (1 Cor. 4:17) and to Macedonia (Acts 19:22).

Observing the text (Read 18:1-22): Paul left Athens and went south to Corinth where he stayed for a year and a half. There he met Aquila and Priscilla who were traveling from Italy. While in Corinth, Silas and Timothy came down to meet Paul from Macedonia. They found Paul testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, but the Jews rejected the message. Because of this Paul takes the message to the Gentiles and the Lord blesses it by bringing many people into the Kingdom. Through a vision from the Lord, Paul remains in Corinth teaching them the word of God and God promises to protect Paul. The verses following the vision confirms God keeping His promise to protect Paul. Paul was brought before the proconsul of Achaia by the Jews, but was protected by Gallio from the Jews. The Roman proconsul dismissed the charges as religious matters of no concern to Rome. Side note: An inscription found at Delphi mentions Gallio's proconsulship and provides a firm date for the Pauline chronology. After this, Paul sets sail for Syria but stopped at Ephesus leaving Aquila and Priscilla there. Paul closes his second missionary journey by going to the church in Jerusalem and then back to Antioch.

Questions (vv. 1-22):

1) What do you learn about Paul in these verses?

- Paul used the same strategy to spread the Gospel everywhere that he went. He would preach the Gospel first to the Jews and then take the message to the Gentiles. Though many Jews rejected the message, Paul did not give up but faithfully preached to them and to the Gentiles. Paul believed in God's promise that He would be with him. Jesus gave this same promise in Matthew 28 and Acts 1, and also here to Paul in chapter 18:10.

2) What drastic action did Paul take when the Jews resisted his message (vv. 6-7)? What were the consequences (vv. 8-15)?

- Paul knows he is not called to save the Jews only to be obedient to preach the gospel to them.

- The result is that he takes the Gospel to the Gentiles and many believed. Paul blesses Paul's faithful obedience to continue to the preach the word although many rejected.

Observing the text (Read 18:23-28): Paul left Corinth accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla and went to Ephesus. Paul left them there and continued to travel throughout the area where he had gone on one of his first missionary journeys. His purpose was to strengthen the disciples (v. 23). This section marks the beginning of Paul's third missionary journey from verse 23 through Acts chapter 21. In verses 23-28, we see Aquila and Priscilla come into contact with a Jew named Apollos.

Questions (vv. 23-28):

1) What do you learn about Apollos in verses 24-28?

- He was a Jew in Ephesus who had traveled from Alexandria. He was eloquent and competent in the scriptures. He taught about 'The Way' but only knew of the baptism of John. After being helped by Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos encouraged by the disciples, went to Achaia where God used him to proclaim Christ to the Jews there.

2) How is Aquila and Priscilla's response to Apollos an example to us?

- It is an encouragement to us to help a newer believer if there is an error in what they are teaching or saying. They were bold enough to speak the truth in love to another believer. Because of this, God went on to use Apollos in a powerful way (v. 28). If they had not said anything to Apollos, his ministry for the Lord may have ended in Ephesus.

Observing the text (Read 19:1-41): Paul in Ephesus. After passing through the inland country, Paul starts his missionary journey with an extended stay in Ephesus (2 years). During his time there we see three main events that take place: 1) Disciples who had not yet received the Holy Spirit. 2) Miracles, signs and wonders which God used to bring fear to the people, tearing down strongholds of evil spirits and magic arts that the people were practicing. 3) Riot in Ephesus over a false god named Artemis. Demetrius and others were jealous for that by which they get their wealth and set themselves against the gospel of Christ.

Questions (vv. 1-41):

1) Looking at the first 22 verses, what good fruit do you see from Paul's ministry in Ephesus although he continued to see much opposition?

- Through Paul's discernment, God uses him when he found disciples of John's baptism. They had not fully heard of Jesus' baptism of the Holy Spirit which brings true regeneration. Through Paul's ministry, these twelve men received the Holy Spirit. Paul continues to faithfully preach the Gospel to the Jews and Gentiles. His ministry is not dependent upon people's response, but upon his obedience to God's call. God performed extraordinary miracles through Paul, healing the sick and casting out evil spirits. God demonstrated the difference between a true disciple in Paul and seven sons who wanted to do what Paul was doing. Even through this, God used Paul's testimony to increase the word of the Lord (v. 20). Paul was able to send Timothy and Eratus, two men he was discipling, to Macedonia to continue the ministry. Paul demonstrates to us the fruit of faithfully making disciples who go on to make more disciples.

2) After reading verses 21-40, we see for the second time in chapters 18 and 19 that the Roman law protected Paul in his ministry. What is the significance that this was the case; the first time in Corinth and now in Ephesus?

- God uses Rome who was impartial in these two cases to give freedom to the spread of the Gospel. These events continue to confirm God's promise not only to protect His messengers, but also to use the authorities he has in place to spread His kingdom.

3) Take some time to reflect on how Paul's mission methods (especially in Acts 17-19) could instruct the modern church? What does he do that we might neglect? **After answering, see question 6 under Personal Reflection below.

- First, he is more flexible than most ministries or churches. He has a very broad array of different approaches, and he tried them all. Generally, churches and ministries settle on one approach.
- Second, he spent far more time sharing his faith in secular spaces than "sacred" ones.
- Third, we see Paul identifying with the people of the city and learned their life and ways. He spent a year and a half at Corinth. We need to listen to people who do not know Him and use that to connect the Gospel to their lives.
- Fourth, we see Paul made himself accessible to the unbelievers. He allowed people to come back at him, to get to know him. He was not defensive, but accessible and engaging. Paul did this by putting himself in the public place day by day.

General Reflection:

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God?
- 2) What does this passage teach us about mankind?
- 3) What is a command to obey in this passage? What has God revealed in your life that needs changing?

Personal Reflection/Application

- 4) Why should believers today seek Jesus' presence over being kept safe after reading of Paul's journey through chapters 18 & 19? How should this change our perspective in life and help us see the purpose for which we were saved?
- 5) How does the story of Paul at Corinth and Ephesus challenge you to become a more effective proclaimer of the Gospel?
- 6) Follow up from question #3 above. Make a list of ways that our church or ministry could do all of the 4 methods that we have seen Paul use.

Prayer

Pray that God would show us that His presence is so much more important in missions than having His protection. Pray that we would trust God with our lives and that we would be obedient to His call to make disciples.

*Various observations and questions in this study guide are quoted from resources on Acts (John Stott, Tim Keller, ESV study bible, and Crossway).