



JOURNEY WITH PAUL: CALLED TO GIVE

Study Guide

October 23, 2022

Opening Prayer

Holy God, help us to continue to discern your call that we might be responsive as we listen to your voice.

As we embark on our journey of faith, push us to go further than we first imagined that we might see you in new and wondrous ways, and that others may be blessed by your presence and power.

Help us to make room for your Spirit to fill our lives with your vision for the world, your values, your future.

Empty of all things we cling onto that do not promote your life and your glory in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Video Teaching

Read Acts 18:23, 19:1-7

On his second missionary journey, Paul wanted to go to Ephesus, but the Holy Spirit somehow kept him from it? He tried again on his third journey, and got there. Early on, he met some disciples whom John the Baptist (or a follower of his) had baptized. They didn't know about Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Paul showed them that John had pointed forward to Jesus, and that the Holy Spirit's power continues Jesus' work in giving us a new inner life. Baptized in the name of Jesus, they began to experience that power.

- John the Baptist's ministry was powerful (cf. Matthew 3:1-12), and not everyone who heard him or whom he baptized was present when he baptized Jesus. It makes sense that there were people who accepted John's message about repentance, but didn't know all about Jesus' life, teaching and resurrection. How fully do you understand your faith? What helps you to keep deepening that understanding, and experiencing the Spirit's life-changing power?
- Scholar N. T. Wright noted, "Luke does not say that tongues always accompanies such baptism." (In fact, he wrote the opposite in a letter to Corinth—cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27-30.) Wright added, "The main thing Luke is doing in this story is to introduce Paul's work in Ephesus, and to show that ... he was concerned with the Spirit's powerful work both in the lives of individuals and out into the wider community." When have you sensed the difference between ministry or service done with purely human effort, and that done when the Spirit's power is present?

Read Acts 19:18-22

As in most major cities, many Ephesian citizens held political or economic power. Some also sought to exercise a more mystical kind of power, through the dark arts of sorcery or magic. But a greater power—the greatest power—had come to town. Luke wrote, "The Lord's word grew abundantly and strengthened powerfully." One sign was that people who believed Paul's message then got rid of sorcery scrolls worth roughly 50,000 days' wages!

- Jesus often stood what seems to us like economic "common sense" on its head (cf. Matthew 6:25-34, Luke 19:1-10). There's no hint that the Ephesian believers thought of reselling their sorcery texts to others, despite their great value in a world where scrolls were hand-copied rarities. Have you ever had to "burn" anything of value in order to follow God faithfully? If so, was it worth whatever the economic cost?
- Ephesus (and the whole Greco-Roman world) had limited medical expertise, even less



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Key points 3rd Missionary Journey

Acts 18:23-21:26

Paul returns to Antioch after stopping at Ephesus, Caesarea, and Jerusalem

(Acts 18:18-22)

Travels through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the disciples (Acts 18:23)

Ministry in Ephesus – 2 years (Acts 19:1-41)

Visits Macedonian and Greek churches

Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Togyllium

(Acts 20:13-15)

Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders at Miletus

(Acts 20:15-38)

Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Phoenicia.

(Acts 21:1, 2)

At Tyre

(Acts 21:3-6)

At Ptolemais

(Acts 21:7)

At Caesarea

(Acts 21:8-14)

emotional awareness, and served a pantheon of fickle gods who seemed to harm humans more than they helped. Finding Jesus' power, many of them broke cleanly from their past. Scholar William Barclay wrote, "It is all too true that many of us hate our sins but either we cannot leave them at all or we do so with a lingering and backward look. There are times when only the clean and final break will suffice." Is there any place in your life where you need to make a clean, final break from something hurtful and wrong?

Read Acts 19:23-41

When some Ephesians burned their costly sorcery scrolls, they set the stage for real trouble. Some Ephesian silversmiths who made profitable temple and goddess statues were furious. They rioted because Paul taught, "Gods made by human hands aren't really gods." Their leader Demetrius claimed their protest was about reverence for the "great goddess Artemis" (verse 27). But his real concern showed in verse 25: "you know that we make an easy living from this business."

- The theater in Ephesus seated about 25,000 people, and it was full of angry people shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Yet Luke wrote, "Paul wanted to appear before the assembly." In this case, disciples and government officials kept him from taking the risk, but Paul wanted to seize any chance to talk to people about Jesus. What risks of any kind are you willing to take for Jesus? Have you ever been like the disciples and government officials, helping someone else avoid a foolish risk?
- Demetrius cleverly exploited the human tendency to favor what is "ours" over anything we see as "foreign." To his fellow craftsmen, he talked about profits, but he got the mob to defend "their" local goddess Artemis. Have you ever seen hometown pride or patriotism turn into a mindless, irrational defense of "ours" over "theirs"? How can we love our city and country without absurdly assuming that "ours" is always better, just because it's "ours"?

Paul's Journey

