

Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

Personal Reflection

Song for the week: Same Power - Jeremy Camp

Song links: <https://youtu.be/InsifiZxVXU?si=Lvcqw09CcNjGNNrw>

Read Acts 19:1-10 Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.



Recap of Paul's time in Ephesus

Acts 16:6: Paul went to Asia but the Holy Spirit prevented him from talking about the gospel and they instead traveled through Syria (Phrygia and Galatia).

Acts 18:19-21: Paul returned to Ephesus (Asia Minor - modern Turkey) with Priscilla and Aquila. Paul stayed only a short while and then went to Syria again (Antioch, Galatia and Phrygia). He left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus; it is not written what they did in his

absence, but it is probable that with their knowledge of the truth of the gospel that they were discipling others, just as they had done with Apollos. *Optional, read Acts 18:24-28*

Acts 19:1-10: Paul returned to Ephesus from Corinth.

It was in Ephesus that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth. Later, Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians to the church in Ephesus. He also urged Timothy to stay in Ephesus to come against false doctrines. *Optional, read 1 Corinthians 16:8, Ephesians 1:1, 1 Timothy 1:3*

Ephesus at that time was the second largest city in the known world with between 200,000 and 300,000 people and it was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. While Phillippi and Corinth were Roman colonies, Ephesus was a free city.

John wrote the book of Revelation and in it Ephesus is the first of seven churches mentioned in *Revelation 2-3*. Tradition is that John died in Ephesus and is buried there.

Evangelism of the gospel in Ephesus “started with the ministry of John the Baptist, whose teaching had produced a number of ‘converts,’ men and women who looked for the Messiah, promised by the Old Testament prophets, who was His forerunner. Apollos and the ‘12 disciples’ were among those who believed in the Savior to come, and who must have spoken to others of their (Old Testament) faith (bible.org).” *Optional, read Acts 18:24-28, Acts 19:1-7*

Think back to the first time you heard the gospel of Jesus. What were some of the first things you learned?

When Paul met the 12 men, they knew about Jesus based on what John the Baptist taught and had been baptized by John for repentance. Paul knew something more - Jesus said to those who believed in Him, “John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:5*).”

The men would have known about the Holy Spirit’s work in the Old Testament but they did not know about the new gift of the Holy Spirit to all who believed in Jesus. They needed to move from belief in a promise of a Messiah to belief in Jesus as Messiah for their forgiveness and salvation and then the Holy Spirit would indwell them.

Consider how your knowledge has grown since first hearing about Jesus. What are some fundamental things you have learned from the Bible that you did not know when you first heard the gospel?

Have you ever learned that something you were taught was not inline with scripture? Was it challenging or easy to accept what the Bible said? Why do you think that was?

Acts is a transitional book - Luke wrote first of Jesus and His ministry (in Luke) and then of the early church (in Acts). “Acts tells us how the Christian movement came into being. The Books of Acts has been called a transitional book because it bridges the gospels and the epistles. It is the historical link that joins the life of Christ with the growth of the Christian church (christianity.com).”

Before Jesus paid the price for people’s sin, they were unclean and the Holy Spirit could not live in them. For His purposes, He did sometimes come upon people in the Old Testament, such as Othniel, Gideon and Saul. After Jesus paid the price for our sin, believers in Him are clean and forgiven. Jesus went to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in all who believe in Jesus. *Optional, read Judges 3:8-10, Judges 6:34, 1 Samuel 10:9-10, Hebrews 10:10-12*

Luke does not record that the Holy Spirit came upon all who believed. Peter was present for the Pentecosts to the Jews and to the Gentiles. This time it is Paul who was present for the Pentecost with the 12 men.

The repeated Pentecosts of the Holy Spirit coming upon people who believed (1) confirmed who God is, (2) were signs of the receiving of the Holy Spirit and (3) included speaking in tongues was so that “they were fitted to preach the gospel to any nation or people to whom they should be sent ... praising and magnifying God and declaring the hidden mysteries of the gospel; expounding the Scriptures, especially the prophecies concerning Christ (Matthew Poole's Commentary).” *Optional, read Acts 2:1-12, Acts 10:44-48*

Today we know who God is as confirmed in the New Testament which has been documented and validated by outside sources including other ancient writers, history and archaeological digs. The New Testament did not

exist then, but now it has been translated into 1,658 languages. God no longer needs to use Pentecosts to confirm Jesus as Messiah, to be a sign of the receiving of the Holy Spirit, to have people speak in languages to spread the gospel nor to identify the prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament.

In his letters to the churches, Paul does not write about additional Pentecosts. Read *1 Corinthians 3:16*, *1 Corinthians 6:19* and *Romans 8:9*. What does Paul say about the Holy Spirit's place with believers?

Putting it into practice:

Paul taught in the synagogues using persuasive arguments. "There comes a point in the most patient labor, however, when it is best no longer to 'cast pearls' before those who 'trample them under foot,' and Paul set an example of wise withdrawal ... in leaving the synagogue when his remaining there only hardened disobedient hearts (MacLaren's Expositions)."

Paul then held discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus who was probably a Greek professor of rhetoric or lecturer on philosophy. Paul was flexible, willing to teach anywhere.

Are there any people with whom you need to practice "wise withdrawal"?

Are you like Paul, willing to talk about Jesus anywhere? Or are there places where you are uncomfortable talking about Jesus? If so, what makes those places uncomfortable?

This week, ask the Holy Spirit to help you reprioritize or lay down whatever it is that might be holding you back from fully stepping into whatever it is that He has for you.

Further Study

Just as Peter was used by God in extraordinary healings, so was Paul. The healings pointed back to the certainty of who God is, just as the additional Pentecosts of the Holy Spirit did. *Optional, read Acts 5:15, Acts 9:32-35*

The Jews knew of the miracles of God from the Old Testament and the Gentiles / Asians would have known of the power of the gods. How would witnessing miracles have proven the truth of the gospel of Jesus? How would this help spread the gospel?

Acts is known as the Acts of the Apostles. What are you learning from them?

Acts is also known as the Acts of the Holy Spirit. What are you learning about the Holy Spirit?

Prayer

Spend time praying as a small group asking the Holy Spirit to guide and lead you this week. Ask Him for the power to do the work God has called you to.

Follow Up

Is there anything from this week's personal reflection time which you would like to discuss more?