

BIGGER THAN YOU

Lesson 18 Strengthening the Disciples

Acts 18 and 19

After preaching the news of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the major cities of Macedonia and in Athens, Paul moved on to Corinth, then Ephesus. He encountered opposition and made disciples for Jesus Christ everywhere he went. He set sail from Ephesus in Asia Minor to return to his sending church at Antioch, thus completing the second missionary journey. (See first map on page 3.)

Once more Paul set out from Antioch to revisit the young churches on a third mission trip intended to strengthen the disciples (Acts 18:23). (See the second map on page 3.) We will see him filling gaps in their understanding, eliminating sources of evil strongholds, encouraging and strengthening the disciples, and selecting apprentice missionaries to accompany him for on-the-job training.

Read Acts 18:1-17

1. Paul arrived at Corinth ahead of his partners, Silas and Timothy.
 - a. With whom did he stay? What was their story?
 - b. What did he do to make a living?
 - c. When did he preach and where?
 - d. After his partners joined him in Corinth, he resumed his usual pattern of daily preaching in the synagogue until he was driven out. What were his parting words? What did he mean?
 - e. Who believed Paul's message?
 - f. In a vision Paul heard an encouraging message from the Lord. What did the Lord say to him?
 - g. Have you received any encouraging messages from the Lord? Tell about your experience.
2. Previous appearances in Jewish courts had been difficult for those who believed in Jesus. The apostles were flogged, Stephen was stoned, James was beheaded. Now Paul is taken to court in Corinth, a Gentile city.
 - a. What were the charges made against Paul?
 - b. What was the ruling of the court?
 - c. How do you explain the irony of the Gentile court being more just than the Jewish court?

Read Acts 18:18-28

3. Paul left those who had become his ministry partners to serve in various places while he returned to Antioch, completing the second missionary journey. After he had been there a while he decided to travel back to places where he had planted churches. This was the beginning of the third missionary journey.
 - a. The word "disciples" refers to those who had believed the gospel and converted to Christ (verse 23). The word means "learner". What was Paul's stated purpose for his third missionary journey?
 - b. Do you consider yourself a disciple of Jesus? How and where do you receive discipling? Perhaps you are also a disciple-maker, in obedience to Matt. 28:19-20. Tell about your experiences.
4. By now, Paul and the other apostles were not the only teachers in the churches. A new teacher, Apollos, came to the church in Ephesus, and many in the churches were serving in roles supporting Paul's ministry.

- a. What were Apollos's strengths? What did he lack?
- b. Who taught him more? How did they do it?
- c. This kind of interaction is an example of brotherly love and acceptance of teaching from each other which is distinctive to the church community. Have you experienced being taught or corrected by a fellow believer or perhaps being the one to teach a teacher? Share your experience.
- d. When Apollos wanted to go teach in Corinth in Achaia, what did the church at Ephesus do to support his teaching ministry? Describe his success (verse 27-28).

Read Acts 19:1-22

5. Find the verses that tell each of the following about Paul's ministry to the church in Ephesus.
 - a. When Paul learned that they had not been baptized in the name of Jesus nor received the Holy Spirit, he baptized them and laid hands on them, and they received the Spirit. Verse _____
 - b. When opposition arose to Paul's teaching in the synagogue about the kingdom of God, he and the believers left the synagogue and moved to a lecture hall. Verse _____
 - c. God supported Paul's ministry in Ephesus with unusual miracles. Verse _____
 - d. Because Paul taught in Ephesus for two years, the gospel spread through Asia. Verse _____
 - e. When Jewish non-believers tried to use the name of Jesus to cast out evil spirits, the man who had the evil spirit attacked them. Verse _____
 - f. The incident with the evil spirit spread fear and honor for the name of Jesus. Verse _____
 - g. Some believers confessed their involvement in magic and burned their sorcery scrolls. Verse _____

6. Is there any remnant of evil in your past life that needs to be piled up and burned? What will you do about it?

Read Acts 19:23-41

7. Ephesus was the location of the Temple of the Goddess Diana (or Artemis), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was believed by the Ephesians that her image fell from heaven. Some modern archeologists believe that the stone from which the image was carved was a meteorite.
 - a. What did Paul teach that the silversmiths who crafted statues of Artemis considered a threat to their source of income (verse 26)?
 - b. The whole city got into an uproar, with the crowds shouting for two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians". Paul wanted to speak, but the believers would not let him. Who calmed the crowd (verse 35)? What did he say to persuade them to calm down (verses 37-40)?
 - c. If Paul had been allowed to speak to the crowd, what do you think he would have spoken about?

8. Make a list of types of businesses in our society that stand to lose money when the Christian message advances. The conflict between money interests and Christian ethics can be a source of persecution for Christians. Discuss.

9. One of Paul's strategies for strengthening disciples was to recruit them as traveling companions and apprentice missionaries and then expand the ministry by sending them out. List the ones named in the following passages: Acts 18:5; 18:18; 19:22 and 19:29.

10. Is there a ministry or missions apprenticeship for which you would volunteer to be recruited? Pray about this. Talk with your Life Group about it.

11. In each of the following references, make note of what Paul did to strengthen disciples.

a. Acts 19:1-7	c. Acts 19:9-10
b. Acts 19:8	d. Acts 19:22

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Second Missionary Journey (Lesson 18 begins at Corinth in Acts 18:1)



Third Missionary Journey (Begins in Acts 18:23)



You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
Acts 1:8