

# Exploring Acts

The Continuing Ministry of Jesus Christ  
Through the Holy Spirit

## Lesson 16

### Day One: Life as a Believer in Ephesus

Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia, and the center of commerce due to its large thriving harbor. Importing and exporting made it a wealthy city; the temple of Diana made it one of the seven known wonders of the world! Paul would spend nearly three years in and around the area (Acts 20:31), the longest stop on any of his missionary journeys. While there he would deal with everything from preaching, to sorcery, to riotous civil unrest involving people steeped in idolatry and the occult. It would prove to be not only dangerous, but also a fruitful exciting time of ministry.

Then as Paul's third missionary journey was nearing its end (around late A.D. 56 and into early A.D. 57), he moved on through the area of Macedonia and on into Greece. Apart from Paul's personal epistles to Timothy, his son in the faith, his teaching in Acts 20 reveals perhaps the most important aspects surrounding the role of those in church leadership. It is a rare poignant look at a loving Apostle speaking as shepherd in issuing a passionate challenge to properly tend and nurture the flock of God.

### Read Acts 19–20.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer. Come to your time of study expectant to receive something from the Lord. Write down your first impressions.

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**Memory verse: Acts 20:24** Write the verse; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

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Arriving in Ephesus, Paul encounters twelve more disciples of John the Baptist who, like that of Apollos (Acts 18), knew little to nothing of Jesus as the promised Messiah.

1. When Paul initially asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit, what did they tell him? v. 2

After Paul more fully explained the gospel to them, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

2. What happened next following Paul's laying on of hands? v. 6

Luke tells us that Paul spent three months in the synagogue boldly speaking and persuading hearers concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

3. What took place when evildoers rose up speaking against the followers of the Way? v. 9

Paul was able to remain for the next two years teaching in Ephesus. As a result, *all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks* (v. 10).

4. Personal: Do *you* see a repeating pattern in Paul's sharing of the gospel? Whenever he met resistance and one door began to close, he looked for another door to open. He remained undeterred from everything but his mission, focusing his mental and physical energies on that which God had called him to do. What does this tell you about . . .

a. God's faithfulness in opposition? \_\_\_\_\_

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b. His servant's steadfastness? \_\_\_\_\_

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c. Think about how God's part and the servant's part are similar and necessary to achieving the goal of evangelism. Record your thoughts.

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## Day Two: From Miracles to Mayhem

Read Acts 19:11–41 for review.

As Paul's problems with the unbelieving Jews grew more intense, the opposition caused him to withdraw from the synagogue and turn to the school of Tyrannus. Not much is known about the man whose name in Greek meant "tyrant" or "sovereign." There were many such Greek schools of learning and stopovers were common for traveling teachers and philosophers passing through. Paul would no doubt have felt quite at home in such an environment—enough to remain for two years!

1. What kinds of miracles did God do through Paul during these days of ministry? v. 12

Within this setting at the school of Tyrannus, it is easy to understand how Paul might encounter itinerant (professional) Jewish exorcists who decided to follow Paul's example of performing miracles. Sceva, a Jewish chief priest at Ephesus, and his seven sons also did likewise, believing they, like Paul, could also cast out demons by using the "name of Jesus" (v. 13).

2. When the seven brothers confronted a possessed man the response was not what they expected. State what the evil spirit said to them. What does this tell you about demons ability to perceive things? Vv. 14–16

Incredibly, the possessed man attacked all seven brothers so violently that he tore off their robes, leaving them behind naked and wounded as they fled in terror! Great fear then fell upon all who heard of this event and the Lord's name continued to be magnified (v. 17).

3. What else took place as news of the incident spread?

- v. 18: \_\_\_\_\_
- v. 19: \_\_\_\_\_
- v. 20: \_\_\_\_\_

It is impossible to read this account and not be struck by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit at work in these new believers. God's presence was evident in Ephesus!

4. What began to take hold of Paul's heart around this same time? v. 21

Paul sent Timothy and Erastus on ahead to Macedonia while he remained a while longer in Asia: "And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way" (v. 23). It is possible Luke's reference to the gospel as the "Way" was intended to let the reader know this trouble was directed at all believers and not just Paul.

5. Who stirred things up in an attempt to bring down Paul's ministry and why? Vv. 24–27

At the heart of the issue for Demetrius was their idol worship of many gods; but it was based on economics. Thousands upon thousands of pilgrims came in and out of Ephesus each year and Paul's preaching had turned many of the people away from purchasing idols while putting the reputation of their great goddess Diana in question. Beginning on an economic note, Demetrius stirred up the whole city to a patriotic religious level (Vv. 28–31).

6. What did Paul want to do about it? What prevented him? Vv. 30–31

The commotion rose to such a frenzy that most of the people did not know why they were there protesting. For some unknown reason, this mob pushed Alexander forward to make his defense to the people, but when they found out he was a Jew they responded by chanting for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

7. Luke introduces an unlikely hero into the scenario who is able to quiet the audience. On what basis does he make the argument that the assembly is unnecessary and unlawful? Vv. 35–41

After the uproar had ceased, Paul moved on to Macedonia and then to Greece where he remained for three months (Acts 20:1–7). This time he was accompanied by men from various churches who were likely appointed to bring their financial contribution to add to the relief effort of the believers in Judea (see Acts 24:17) and to protect Paul along the way. The group sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread and stopped in Troas for a brief stay of seven days.

We will pick up the story again on *Day Four*, dealing with the miraculous healing of Eutychus. Next we look closely at the important details Paul had on his heart for the church leadership before his final departure. Knowing this would be his last visit with these elders of Ephesus, Paul poured out his passionate challenge to them to lovingly tend and nurture the flock of God.

## Day Three: Corinth: Biblical Church Leadership

Read Acts 20:13-38 for review.

Refer to the map in the back of your Bible to reference Paul's third missionary trip. After the riot at the Temple of Diana, Paul spent some time with the believers in Ephesus, then moving on to Macedonia and Greece, back through Macedonia to Philippi, and on to Troas, Assos, by boat to Mitylene, Chios, Samos and then Miletus, where Paul invited the Ephesian elders to join him for a last church meeting. He reminds them of the plot of the Jews against him and that he is uncertain of what awaits him in Jerusalem. Regardless, he is prepared to finish his course. He issues a stern warning to be on guard against erroneous teaching, exhorting them to love and look after one another. After a time of prayer together, Paul issues his final farewell.

1. Allowing for travel time, Paul would've waited from 3–5 days for the elders to arrive; once they did, he used his life as an example. Summarize what Paul stated in Vv. 19–21.

Paul was reviewing with these elders that his message had always been that access to God comes only by repentance and faith in Christ. Today in *Deeper Discoveries* we will examine the remainder of Paul's message. Think carefully about the specifics in verses 22–28. Look for a spiritual lesson; what is Paul conveying to the elders? What does it mean to *you* personally?

### Deeper Discoveries ~

- a. Vv. 22–23 Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
Application: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Vv. 24–25 Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
Application: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Vv. 26–27 Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
Application: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. V. 28 Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
Application: \_\_\_\_\_

Paul had a definite discernment that he would never see the Ephesian elders again. Unmoved by the uncertainty of what lay ahead, he was determined to finish his course. He would now sound the alarm by issuing a strong warning to these men.

The phrase “which He purchased” is *peripoieo* in the Greek, meaning “to acquire, obtain, or gain for oneself.” In other words, Jesus’ death and the shedding of His own blood was the price required to redeem the church. This was serious business to Paul.

- 2. What prophetic word did Paul foretell would come upon the churches after his departure? Knowing this, what did Paul not cease to do? Vv. 29–31
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. Once again using himself as an example, what life lesson did Paul leave the churches? Vv. 33–35

We might be inclined to view Paul as a hero; but he saw himself as a man on a mission, driven by the call of God to share the gospel with as many people as God would allow! Here using simple personal examples, tears, prayers and passionate pleas, Paul says his final good-byes.

- 4. If you were to summarize Paul's life-example into a sentence or two, what would you say sums up the man?  
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## Day Four: The Miraculous Healing of Eutychus

Paul's last meeting with the believers would be a late one—lasting into the night, but no one seemed to mind (Acts 20:7–12). While he spoke, seated unnoticed among the group was a young man of Troas, Eutychus (whose name meant “fortunate”). He had climbed up to the third floor window, no doubt to rise above the stuffy atmosphere and breathe in some fresh air. Common apartment dwellings of the day were often several stories high and poorly constructed. So as the hours lingered on, the young man's eyes grew tired from the heat, causing him to fall into a deep sleep. Eutychus then spiraled downward onto the hard pavement below. The meeting grew to an abrupt halt amid the screams of onlookers, but it was too late—his limp body lay motionless and he was a lifeless corpse, pronounced dead at the scene.

1. What did Paul immediately do? v. 10

Paul wasn't around when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:35–42), so he was apparently imitating the actions of the Old Testament prophets familiar to him.

2. What did Paul do in like manner to that of Elijah and Elisha? See 1 Kings 17:17–24 and 2 Kings 4:32–37.

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3. What did Paul tell the people? v. 10

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- a. What do you think this miracle would have revealed to the people about Paul?

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Eutychus was not only *fortunate* as his name indicated—God's power was also in evidence. This miraculous act brought much comfort to the believers in Troas (20:12). Paul resumed speaking to an attentive grateful crowd until dawn and then he departed. The Amplified translation of v.12 reads: *They took the youth home alive, and were not a little comforted and cheered and refreshed and encouraged.* The people had heard the Word and witnessed a miracle! Their last meeting with Paul would never be forgotten.

4. Think about it: We don't often understand the workings of God. He does not give us the reasons *why* He allows some things to happen the way they do. But in our challenging trials, we can be certain that He will take the things that cause us alarm, confusion and grief and turn them into miraculous moments that bring Him glory and us blessing. If you have a situation right now that is causing you anxiety and concern, will you turn it over to Him, allowing Him to give you His peace? Write it down and offer it to the Lord.

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Day Five: Selah . . . Pause and Ponder the Week in Review

This section of the lesson is intended to be an at-a-glance, user-friendly recap of what you've learned this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark what stands out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share in your discussion group.

1. What is your take-away-truth? How are you working to make it a part of your daily walk?

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2. Write out this week's verse from memory.

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3. What does this week's verse reveal to you?

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4. Personal: To aspire to spiritual leadership is an honorable thing. If you could be a leader in your church, what to you would be the most important priority? Why?

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**Prayer Time:** Write down the people in your group to keep in prayer this next week.

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