

Acts 18–20 Study

Paul's Ministry in Corinth, Ephesus, and the Journey to Jerusalem

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT · BIBLE STUDY SERIES

We are following Paul through some of his most fruitful and costly ministry years — extended stays, deep friendships, powerful miracles, and a farewell that brought grown men to tears. These chapters show us what faithful, long-haul discipleship looks like. Come ready to listen, reflect, and share.

Chapter 18 — Corinth and Beyond

READ: ACTS 18:1–28

Paul arrives in Corinth and forms a life-changing partnership with Aquila and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers and fellow believers. He spends eighteen months there — one of his longest single stays — reasoning in the synagogue and planting a church. When fear threatens to silence him, God speaks directly: "I have many people in this city." Before leaving, Paul's dear friends Aquila and Priscilla take the gifted Apollos aside and, with wisdom and gentleness, help him understand the faith more fully.

Key Verse

"Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." — Acts 18:9–10

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul stayed in Corinth for eighteen months, working as a tentmaker and reasoning in the synagogue. What does this model of patient, everyday presence say to you about how we share the Gospel in our own spheres?
2. Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside *privately* to help him understand the faith more completely. When have you been on the giving or receiving end of that kind of quiet mentorship? What made it effective?
3. God told Paul, "Do not be afraid — I have many people in this city." How does that kind of reassurance shape your courage to speak and act in difficult places?

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Chapter 19 — Ephesus: Power and Upheaval

READ: ACTS 19:1–41

Paul spends more than two years in Ephesus — his longest recorded stay — and it becomes a center of extraordinary transformation. Disciples who had known only John's baptism receive the Holy Spirit. God works unusual miracles. But a botched exorcism by the Sons of Sceva exposes the difference between knowing Jesus and merely using His name. New believers make a stunning public declaration by burning their magic scrolls — worth fifty thousand days' wages. And when the Gospel begins threatening the idol-making trade, Demetrius the silversmith ignites a city-wide riot.

Key Verse

"So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily." — **Acts 19:20**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

4. The disciples in Ephesus were sincere believers but had an incomplete understanding of the faith. Are there areas of your own spiritual life where you sense God calling you to go deeper or further?

5. The Sons of Sceva tried to use Jesus' name as a formula without knowing Him personally. What is the difference between religious activity and genuine relationship with Christ? How do you keep that distinction alive in your own life?
6. New believers burned their magic scrolls at great personal cost — valued at fifty thousand days' wages. What does costly, visible repentance look like today? Is there anything the Lord might be prompting you to let go of?
7. Demetrius's riot was really about economics — the Gospel threatened his livelihood. Where do you see the Gospel clashing with economic or cultural systems in your world, and how do you navigate that tension?

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Chapter 20 — Farewell at Miletus

READ: ACTS 20:1–38

Paul journeys through Macedonia, and in Troas a young man named Eutychus falls from a window during Paul's late-night teaching — and is raised from the dead. Sensing that Jerusalem lies ahead with chains and hardship, Paul bypasses Ephesus but calls its elders to meet him at Miletus. What follows is the only speech in Acts addressed directly to church leaders: a tender, honest farewell in which Paul lays bare his heart — his tears, his warnings, his prayers. The elders weep on the beach, knowing they will not see him again.

Key Verses

"But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." — **Acts 20:24**

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." — **Acts 20:35**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

8. In his farewell, Paul described his ministry as marked by humility, tears, and going house to house. Which of those qualities feels most challenging — or most natural — to you in your own walk with God?
9. Paul said he did not shrink from declaring "the whole counsel of God" (v. 27). Are there truths you find it hard to speak — or hear? What helps you stay honest and open?
10. Paul warned that false teachers would come from outside the church *and* rise up from within it. How can a community stay discerning without becoming suspicious or divided?
11. The elders wept because they would "see his face no more." Paul's ministry was deeply relational. Who has invested in you like that? Who are you investing in?
12. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." How does a spirit of generosity shape both your personal life and your community's witness?

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Connecting Themes

- **Faithful Presence** — staying longer, going deeper
 - **Discipleship** — everyone needs someone to walk with them further
 - **Relationship, Not Formula** — knowing Christ vs. using His name
 - **Costly Obedience** — what are you willing to give up?
 - **The Shepherd's Heart** — leading with love, humility, and tears
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Memory Verses

Choose one to take with you this week.

Acts 18:9–10

"Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

Acts 19:20

"So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily."

Acts 20:24

"But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God."

Acts 20:35

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Personal Reflection

This week, which of the three chapters speaks most directly to where you are right now?

What is one thing you want to carry with you?