

Acts 19 Bible Study

1. In what ways are Christians noticed (eg by friends and family, the media, political leaders)? Are these things good or bad? Is it a good thing if we are **not** noticed?

2. Read Acts 19:1-7. Some people use this passage to teach that there is a “second blessing” after conversion, where you receive the Holy Spirit. What do you think? You might also compare these disciples with Apollos in Acts 18:24-26.

*Acts 1:8 is the map of Acts – 3 people groups, each alienated from God by sin, but each to be drawn near through the gospel of Jesus. Each time the gospel **first** comes to one of these groups, the Spirit is clearly present (Acts 2:2-4, 8:14-17, 10:44-45). This group in Acts 19 the only exception. But they don't easily fit into one of the other groups, because they are called 'disciples' – but more of John the Baptist than of Jesus (unlike Apollos). So this (very small) group receives the Holy Spirit too. But within a generation there would be no others who had been baptised by John. Therefore this is not a passage for teaching about what happens to all Christians.*

3. Read Acts 19:8-10. Do you think that over those two years Paul literally spoke to every person in the province of Asia?

No. But with such a focused ministry, God used Paul to save many people from all over the province who had come into Ephesus since it was an important city. As they returned home and others moved out from the city, they took the gospel with them, sharing it with others in their own towns and villages. In Acts, the spread of the gospel by ordinary Christians is often assumed – there seems to be no concept of a follower of Jesus who is silent about their Lord. The same is to be true for us!

4. Read Acts 19:11-22. What can we learn about Ephesus from these verses?

There seemed to be a great interest and practice in the occult, and evil spirits were present in a way we have not read of in other Gentile cities.

5. Should we expect things such as those described in vv11-12 to happen today? How does the context help us? See also Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:18-21, 3:10

That Luke records this here suggests that it was unusual. It seems that God was present to do such miracles to make clear that the evil spirits and occult powers were no match for his power at work in the gospel.

6. Why were the scrolls burned in v19? Why do you think this was done publicly? What was the impact of this action?

The newly converted Christians realised the scrolls could have no further use. They represented an alternative (and false) lordship to that of Jesus. Even to sell them to recoup their cost would be to encourage others to remain in such darkness and unbelief. Perhaps they were burned publicly as a testimony to others in Ephesus that Jesus makes all such alternatives to him worthless. The overall impact is a powerful testimony to the gospel, and as a result it spread even more.

7. Read Acts 19:23-41. The city is 'disturbed' by the gospel. Why? Is there something we could learn from this?

It is the impact of changed lives and the resulting threat to profit – almost a repeat of Acts 16:16-22. When we live lives that are changed by the gospel, and different from how we used to live or how others around us live, we will stand out. The gospel will stand out more for what it is. And so people who don't worship Jesus will see the gospel more for what it is – a threat! - or an attractive alternative to their own beliefs and lifestyle.

8. Can you think of any equivalent today to the burning of the scrolls and a downturn in the trade of idols & shrines? Are there any things you needed to get rid of or have chosen to go without because you are a Christian? Are there things you should have thrown away but have chosen to hold on to (or have even acquired)? Pray about this, even asking for wisdom to see any 'blind spots'.

This might be better done in pairs or threes rather than the whole group.