



Community Group Discussion Guide

Go Therefore: Acts 18:23 - 20:1 – Sep 12, 2021

I. Starter Questions:

- How many places have you lived in your life?
- Where did you live the longest and for how long?

II. Discussion of Scripture:

This week we witness the work of the Holy Spirit in Ephesus.



Ephesus was the capital city of a Roman province in Asia. It was a significant center of trade, located near a harbor at the mouth of the Cayster River in western Asia Minor. The city lay in a long, fertile valley. Major roads connected Ephesus to all the other significant cities in Asia Minor. Ephesus was known for its amphitheater, the largest in the world, designed to hold up to 50,000 spectators. It was also the location of the great temple of Artemis, or Diana, built in 550 BC. This temple, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was “425 ft. long and 220 ft. wide; each of its 127 pillars which supported the roof of its colonnade was 60 ft. high” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). Much Ephesian industry was related to this temple. Craftsmen sold shrines and household images of the goddess that worshipers could take with them on long journeys. The Ephesians were proud of their religious heritage and its accompanying legends. Despite the strong objections to the gospel, many Ephesians came to faith in Christ through the faithful ministry of Paul and his companions. A church began there, and a few years later, Paul wrote to them a letter that we now call the book of Ephesians. Four hundred years later, Ephesus was the site of a major church meeting known as the Council of Ephesus.

Excerpts from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Ephesus-in-the-Bible.htm>

Acts 18:23-28

²³ After spending some time there (Antioch), he (Paul) departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. ²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Discussion:

- 1. Name all the descriptions Luke provides about Apollos.**
- 2. What does it mean that he knew only the baptism of John?**
- 3. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him speak and recognized that his teaching was incomplete did they rebuke him? Or correct him in public? How does verse 26 describe how they handled it?**
- 4. What attitude did the fellow Christians have when Apollos wished to head to Achaia (Corinth being its capitol)?**
- 5. What are some examples of unity among the believers in this passage? What was the positive result?**
- 6. What are some ways that pride could have crept in and it might have been handled poorly?**
- 7. How can we apply this positive example in our lives today?**
- 8. How was the Holy Spirit at work in this passage?**

Acts 19:1-10

And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴ And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all. ⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Discussion:

- 1. Compare this passage with the previous one regarding Apollos. What are the similarities? What are the differences?**
- 2. What was the difference between the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus?**
- 3. How was the Holy Spirit at work in this passage?**
- 4. How many disciples were there? What does this remind you of?**
- 5. We often see a pattern in Acts where Paul takes his message to the synagogue where it's welcomed for a short time and then the ministry moves elsewhere. Discuss this dynamic. Why might have Paul done it this way? What would it have looked like? Who would have been present in the various situations? How did it compare to Jesus' ministry? Is there anything we can learn from this, or does it not apply to today?**
- 6. Picture Paul being in Ephesus for two years. What does that bring to your mind? Does that seem like a long or short time to you? What effects or results might have come out of that?**

Acts 19:11-20

¹¹ And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." ¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" ¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

- 1. Read verses 11-12. How would this have compared to Jesus' ministry?**
- 2. Why does Luke include this story about the Jewish exorcists? What was the ultimate result in Ephesus of this occurring?**
- 3. How do you see the Holy Spirit at work in this passage?**
- 4. What comfort can verse 20 give us? Is the word of the Lord increasing and prevailing still today? Who is in control of this, man or God?**

Acts 19:21–20:1

²¹ Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. ²³ About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.” ²⁸ When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹ So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. ³⁰ But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹ And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater. ³² Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³ Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. ³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ³⁵ And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? ³⁶ Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷ For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸ If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹ But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰ For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” ⁴¹ And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

20 After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

- 1. What might be the purpose of including this story in the narrative of Acts?**
- 2. What were the motivations of Demetrius when he stirred up this uprising? Would you say he was more concerned with his business or with defending his religious beliefs?**
- 3. Compare this uprising with the uprising at the time of Jesus' crucifixion? What are the similarities? What are the differences? How do the motivations of the Pharisees and religious leaders compare with these antagonists?**
- 4. The word confusion is used a couple of times when describing this uprising? How does Satan use confusion to attempt to disrupt our lives today?**

5. **Would you say the outcome of this event was positive or negative or neither? What were its effects ultimately?**
6. **What lessons can we learn from this story in regard to our lives as believers? as a church?**

III. Responding in Prayer:

Pray that we would be a church that earnestly seeks God and to join him where He is at work. Pray for the confusion that the enemy is stirring up in our world, our nation, and our lives today through a variety of means. "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace." (1 Cor. 14:33) Pray that just like with the crucifixion of our savior, Jesus, God would turn the enemy's plans to destroy into good by bringing more souls into His eternal kingdom. Pray that God would strengthen us and encourage us through his Holy Spirit.