

Paul in Ephesus

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey
(Acts 19:1-20)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Have you ever been in a completely dark place, a place so dark that you couldn't even see your hand in front of your face? That would be completely and totally dark, wouldn't it? How would you feel if you were in such a place? (Lost, scared, confused, desperate to find light.)

The Bible tells us that a person living life without the truth of the gospel is living in the dark—spiritual darkness. Today in our lesson we are going to focus on how the Holy Spirit is like a light that shines in a person's heart so they can clearly understand what God wants them to see spiritually.

Let's look at the following verses in our Bibles:

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

John 8:12

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

We are each holding a Bible in our hands. This is a very special book that God has given to us. This book is the very Word of God. Every word in this book is true.

God gave us His word so we can know the truth about Him.

Opening Prayer

Father, we want to walk in the light so that we do not stumble and fall into a pit of sin. Open our eyes so that we might see the wonder of Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Lesson

Last week we left Paul off in Athens. Today Paul travels to Ephesus where he met some men who were disciples.

Before I go on with the story, let's talk about John the Baptist. Who can remind us of who he was?

John the Baptist came on the scene before Jesus. He wanted people to get ready because the Messiah was coming, the Savior they had been waiting for since the beginning of time. So, John the Baptist told people they needed to turn from their sins and be baptized.

If you recall, John told the people that he was baptizing them with water, but the One that would come after him, would baptize them with the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11 [Have kids turn to this verse....]

"I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Now, back to Acts. The Holy Spirit gave Paul the wisdom to know that these men didn't have a full understanding about Jesus.

Acts 19:2-4

"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. "No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (3) "Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John." (4) Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus."

Paul explained the gospel to these men. He told them that Jesus had lived a sinless life, died on the cross, and then came back to life. He explained that anyone who put their faith in the Lord Jesus could be saved from their sins and receive eternal life.

When these disciples heard Paul clearly teach about Jesus, they believed in Him as their Savior.

Acts 19:5-6

As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.

When God's Word is taught, the Holy Spirit helps those listening to understand God's truth and to clearly see God's plan of salvation. It's like a light goes on in their minds.

Acts 19:8-10

Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. (9) But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. (10) This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit gave Paul the power to teach boldly in the Jewish synagogue for three months! And it was the Holy Spirit who gave these people a clear understanding about God's plan to save them from their sin. He was turning the light on in their hearts as they heard the truth Paul was teaching them.

Ask: Would it surprise you to know that the Bible talks about people who love darkness instead of light?

John 3:19-21 [Have kids turn to this verse....]

And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were

evil. (20) All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. (21) But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants."

Most people want to hide their sin. They don't want it displayed for all the world to see. Some people like living a sinful life so much, they do not want to leave the darkness. On the other hand, some people, when their sin is found out, are so ashamed, they want to come clean. They confess their sin and want to be made right again with the person they sinned against and with God.

Every person has a choice to love darkness or love light. To choose to love darkness means to continue to live a sinful life that doesn't please God and keeps them from having a relationship with Him. To choose to love light means to repent and turn from your sinful ways and believe in Jesus who saves you and helps you to no longer want to do sinful wicked things.

God's enemy Satan does everything he can to keep people from understanding what Jesus came to do for us. He wants to keep people in spiritual darkness.

Even though Paul was boldly teaching the truth, some people became stubborn and rejected his message. But Paul didn't get discouraged. He simply stopped teaching in the synagogue, took the believers with him, and started teaching at another place. The Holy Spirit enabled him to continue to faithfully teach God's Word in Ephesus for two years. Soon everyone heard the gospel.

As Paul shared the Good News, the Holy Spirit performed miracles through Paul so that people could see God's power and know that what Paul was telling them was the truth.

Acts 19:11-12

God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. (12) When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

It is important to understand that it was not the objects that healed the people, it was their faith in Jesus that healed them. The Holy Spirit gave Paul the power to do these miracles to prove that what he was teaching was the truth. A miracle is something only God Himself can do.

There were some people listening to Paul who were watching all the miracles that Paul was doing and noticing how popular it was making him with the people. So, they wanted to heal people who were being controlled by evil spirits just like Paul so people would notice them.

A group of Jews, traveling from town to town, were trying use the name of Jesus, just like Paul, even though they did not have the Holy Spirit. One time they tried to cast an evil spirit out of a man.

Acts 19:13-16

*A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" (14) **Seven sons of Sceva**, a leading priest, were doing this. (15) But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" (16) Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered.*

These seven sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva tried to copy Paul, but they were not believers in the Lord Jesus and did not have the Holy Spirit.

Only God has authority and power over evil spirits. Evil spirits are not going to obey someone who does not have the Holy Spirit. These seven men were beaten and humiliated by the evil spirit for trying to do God's work in their own power.

When news spread of Sceva's sons, it caused a positive reaction. People were gripped with fear and treated the Lord Jesus' name with great honor and respect.

Acts 19:17-20

The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. (18) Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. (19) A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. (20) So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.

Ask: What do you think might have happened to these believers if they had not confessed their sins and burned their magic books?

They needed to make a complete break with their past. Otherwise, if God did not answer their prayers right away or in the way they wanted, it would have been tempting for them to go back to their old ways.

Do you see how the Holy Spirit turned the light on in the hearts of many people who believed in Jesus? The Holy Spirit showed these believers that witchcraft (sorcery) is sin and they confessed their sins and repented. They chose to love light and turn from the darkness and evil.

We have a choice every time we sin. We can choose to stay in our sin or we can choose to walk in the light.

Ask: What do you think will happen if we refuse to confess our sin? We will become bitter and angry and the evil one will use us to stir up trouble in other people's lives.

Ask: What do you think will happen if we come clean with our sin? Our lives will be filled with peace and joy.

Choose to walk before God in the light of life (Psalm 56:13)

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Thank You for shining Your light into our lives so that we can see that Your ways are right and good. In Jesus' name. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Spin the Wheel

Make a spinner with numbers. Upon a correctly answered question, the student spins the wheel to determine points for his/her team.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion.

1. What is the difference between John the Baptist's baptism and Jesus' baptism? (John baptized those who had turned from their sins with water to get ready for the coming Messiah; Jesus baptizes people who have put their faith in what He did on the cross with the Holy Spirit to give them the power we need to live our lives in a way that pleases God.)
2. When Paul clearly explained the truth of the gospel to the disciples in Ephesus, what did they do? (They believed in Jesus, were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit.)
3. Explain what it means to have spiritual light. (To understand who Jesus is and what He came to do for us. To live with the indwelling Holy Spirit.)
4. How is the Holy Spirit like light? (He helps people to clearly understand what God's Word teaches.)
5. Explain what it means to have spiritual darkness. (To live a life without the Holy Spirit.)
6. How can you know whether you are a person who loves light or loves darkness? (If you love light, you will love Jesus and want to please Him; if you love darkness, you will enjoy sin and evil.)
7. Why did the Holy Spirit enable Paul to perform miracles? (The Holy Spirit performed miracles through Paul so that people could see God's power and know that what Paul was telling them was the truth.)
8. What happened to the sick people who touched Paul's handkerchiefs or apron? (They were healed.)
9. What healed the sick people? (It was their faith in Jesus that healed them. It was not Paul's power, nor was it the handkerchief; it was the power of the Holy Spirit.)
10. Why were Sceva's sons beaten and humiliated by an evil spirit? (They tried to cast out an evil spirit without the power of the Holy Spirit.)
11. Why did the seven sons of Sceva try to cast out the evil spirit? (They wanted to be famous, like Paul.)
12. Why couldn't the sons of Sceva perform the miracle? (They did not have the power of the Holy Spirit.)
13. How did the news of the sons of Sceva's humiliation cause a positive reaction? (People were gripped with fear and treated the Lord Jesus' name with great honor and respect.)
14. What happened to the sons of Sceva's clothes? (The evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence it ripped their clothes off.)