

Paul in Macedonia

(Acts 17)

Introduction

As we have journeyed through the book of Acts, we have been learning about the Holy Spirit.

Ask: Who is the Holy Spirit? (God, third person of the Trinity).

Ask: What are some things we have learned that the Holy Spirit does? (He's our helper, counselor, comforter, teacher and guide; He gives us courage and power to say *No* to sin and *Yes* to God's way. He tells us the future and reminds us of what God's word says. He gives us the words we need when we are telling people about God. He is the revealer of all truth and He always glorifies God.)

Ask: Does the Holy Spirit only do these things for believers? *No!* In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who gives people understanding so they can become believers in Jesus. He convicts the non-believer of sin and reveals the truth of the gospel, that Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for their sins. He draws us into relationship.

The Holy Spirit is constantly trying to communicate with all people. So, why do you think it is that some people do not respond to Him?

That's a very good question, isn't it? In today's lesson, we will discover the answer to this question.

Opening Prayer

Father, Thank You that you send the Holy Spirit. Help us to tune into His voice so that we don't miss a thing He's trying to say to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 ESV)

Lesson

We left Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke off last week in Philippi. Now they travel to Thessalonica. [Locate on map.]

Paul in Thessalonica

In Thessalonica, the team stayed with a man by the name of Jason.

As usual, Paul went to the Synagogue to preach Jesus...

Acts 17:2-3

As was Paul's custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he used the Scriptures to reason with the people. (3) He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Messiah."

It was always Paul's custom to go to the Synagogue, the Jewish place of worship, to preach the Gospel. The promise of the Holy Spirit had been given to the Jews in the scriptures and Paul wanted to tell them that the Messiah they had been looking for is Jesus!

Acts 17:4

Some of the Jews who listened were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women.

Some of the Jews were convinced that Jesus really was the Messiah that Jews had been waiting for since the beginning of Time. But some were not convinced.

Acts 17:5-7

*But some of the Jews were **jealous**, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of Jason, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd. (6) Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers instead and took them before the city council. "Paul and Silas have caused trouble all over the world," they shouted, "and now they are here disturbing our city, too. (7) And Jason has welcomed them into his home. They are all guilty of treason against Caesar, for they profess allegiance to another king, named Jesus."*

Ask: What caused people to reject Paul's message? (Look at verse 5. They were jealous.)

When it speaks of the Jews here in verse 5, it is talking about the leaders of the Jewish religion. The Jewish religious leaders tried to block anyone from putting their trust in Jesus because that would cause them to lose control of the people.

Look at what their jealousy caused them to do: The Jews stirred up trouble for the believers. They formed a mob and started a riot and attacked Jason. They dragged Jason and some others before the city council and accused them of breaking the law. Then they forced Jason to pay money to get released.

Acts 17:8-9

The people of the city, as well as the city council, were thrown into turmoil by these reports. (9) So the officials forced Jason and the other believers to post bond, and then they released them.

Because of all the turmoil, later that night, the believers sent Paul and the team to another town called Berea.

Paul in Berea

Acts 17:10-12

*That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to **Berea**. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. (11) And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth. (12) As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men.*

Here, as Paul was teaching the Bereans about Jesus, they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul was saying was true. And, the Holy Spirit spoke to their hearts and assured them that Paul was telling the truth. So, they very willingly placed their faith in Jesus.

Ask: What made the difference between the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica and the people in Berea? Why were some people receptive and some not?

The Bereans were hungry for the truth. They didn't just accept what Paul said as true, they went home and searched the Scriptures for themselves to see if he was telling them the truth. And they listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As a result, many of them believed. But this made the Jews in Thessalonica angry.

Acts 17:13

But when some Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they went there and stirred up trouble.

When the Jewish religious leaders in Thessalonica heard that people in Berea were trusting in Jesus, they traveled there and stirred up trouble. So, the believers in Berea quickly got Paul on a boat that set sail for Athens.

Acts 17:14-15

The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind. (15) Those escorting Paul went with him all the way to Athens; then they returned to Berea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to hurry and join him.

Paul in Athens

When Paul got to Athens he was deeply troubled about something.

Acts 17:16

*While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was **deeply troubled** by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city.*

Athens was a city full of idols. As Paul was walking through the city, he saw all the statues that represented the gods the people of Athens worshipped. The Holy Spirit gave Paul wisdom how to speak to these people.

Acts 17:22-23

So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, (23) for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about.

Just to make sure they hadn’t left out any gods, they had a statue for an unknown God. So, Paul began to teach them about this unknown God that they worshiped along with all the other idols.

Acts 17:24-25

“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, (25) and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.

Paul went on to explain how God is the Creator of all things and deserves our worship.

Acts 17:29-31

*And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. (30) “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now **he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him.** (31) For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”*

The crowd had different responses to Paul’s message.

Acts 17:32

When they heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, “We want to hear more about this later.”

Some people laughed at Paul, but some wanted to hear more about what Paul had to say. Some became believers.

Ask: What can we learn from this? Why is it that some people trust in Jesus for their salvation but others do not? Why is it that some people can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and others do not? [Teacher, let the students discuss.]

Acts 28:27 [Have kids turn to this verse....]

For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.’

Ask: Why did the Berean’s receive the message of the cross?

The Bereans trusted the word of God. They listened to the Holy Spirit.

We must tune our spiritual ears to hear His voice. In other words, we must desire to hear God speaking into our lives.

The very best way to “hear” the voice of God, is by spending time alone with Him, reading His word. The Bible tells us everything we need to know for life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

The Holy Spirit is always talking to us. He wants us to know God. The better we know God, the more we will want to live our lives in a way that pleases Him.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, Thank You that You make Yourself known to us. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit says. Help us to listen and understand with our spiritual ears. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Snow Ball Fight

Print each question on a separate piece of paper. Wad the papers up and let the children have a “snow ball” fight with them. When you say, “Stop!” The first person on a team answers the question in their “snow ball.” When you say, “Go!” the snowball fight starts up again, this time with one less snowball, however all the kids stay in the game. Go until all the snowballs have been answered, alternately by a child on each team. When you get down to only a few snowballs, the kids will have to be quick to pick up a snowball to throw! Each right answer is worth 1,000 points.

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

1. Why did Paul always go to the Synagogue, the Jewish place of worship, to preach the Gospel? (The promise of the Holy Spirit had been given to the Jews in the scriptures and Paul wanted to tell them that the Messiah they had been looking for is Jesus!)
2. How did people in Thessalonica respond to Paul’s message of the Messiah? (Some believed; others did not.)
3. How did people in Berea respond to Paul’s message? (They studied to see if what Paul taught was true, then gladly placed their faith in Jesus.)
4. What made the difference between the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica and the people in Berea? (The Bereans were hungry for the truth. They searched the scriptures looking for it.)
5. Why did the Jewish religious leaders from Thessalonica go to Berea to stir up trouble? (They were angry that people in Berea were putting their faith in Jesus. They were jealous)
6. Why were these Jewish religious leaders jealous? What were they jealous of? (They were jealous of the power that Jesus had over the people; they realized they were losing control.)
7. What did their jealousy cause the Jewish religious leaders from Thessalonica to do? (They went to Berea to stir up trouble. They formed a mob and started a riot and attacked Jason.)
8. Why was Paul troubled in Athens? (The people worshiped many idols. Verse 16)
9. What are the different responses that people have when they hear the Good News? (Some believe, some don’t believe, some cause trouble trying to get people to stop sharing the gospel.)
10. Why is it that some people trust in Jesus for their salvation but others do not? In other words, why is it that some people can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and others do not? (Some people plug their ears to the voice of the Spirit. They don’t want to hear Him speak.)
11. How does the Holy Spirit speak to people? (Mostly through the scriptures, but also as you observe God’s creation.)

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