



NEW TESTAMENT • LESSON 53

## PAUL'S WORK IN EPHESUS

*Apostles care for the local church and preserve sound doctrine.*



**MONDAY**

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### **THE STORY: ACTS 18:24 - 19:8**

Paul teaches sound doctrine and corrects the disciples of Apollos. Apollos visited Ephesus and began to teach there about the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus. His teaching, though presented with eloquence, had deficiencies. When Paul arrived in Ephesus he met about a dozen disciples of Apollos. Paul immediately discerned the absence of knowledge of the operation and ministry of the Holy Spirit. These men may have already been converted but were unregenerate seekers. In either case, one thing is certain: God used Paul to strengthen their doctrine and ensure they understood the whole and accurate gospel from beginning to end. They received Paul's teaching, believed by faith, were baptized and then received the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying.

Paul, seeing the opportunity to serve this group, spent three months in the synagogue laboring to bring the leaders and the people sound doctrine concerning the kingdom of God.

### **TALK ABOUT IT:**

How did God use Paul to serve the emerging leaders of the local church in Ephesus? (God used Paul to ensure their doctrine was accurate, and he helped them

understand the complete gospel.)

What role does the gospel play in sound doctrine? (The gospel is the centerpiece of sound doctrine. If a person has the gospel correct but has error in other matters, they still have the message of salvation. If a person has everything else correct about Jesus but does not have an accurate gospel, that person is missing the very thing needed to be saved. Parents, take time to review the gospel with your children.)

**PRAY:**

Thank God for the ministry, sacrificial substitutionary death, and resurrection of our Lord – which is the gospel.



**T U E S D A Y**

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**THE STORY: ACTS 19:9,10**

Paul trained the local leaders. After three months of teaching in the synagogue and meeting with opposition, Paul turned his attention to the local leaders to train them for the work of ministry in the local church at Ephesus. For two years he taught them daily.

It is reasonable to assume that as a result of Paul's work in Ephesus, local churches were formed all over Asia. This occurred both from Paul's teaching directly to people who came to hear him over those two years and from the leaders he trained to take the message elsewhere in Asia Minor. By the time Paul returned to Ephesus (see Acts 20:17) there were elders and a thriving local church. The work of Paul, as an apostle, in correcting false and incomplete doctrine cannot be underestimated.

**TALK ABOUT IT:**

Why did Paul withdraw with the disciples from the synagogue? (The people at the synagogue persisted in their unbelief and spoke evil of the Christians.)

What did Paul give the next two years to doing? (Paul took the next two years to teach the disciples and Christians the Word of the Lord.)

How do we receive the kind of teaching Paul brought to the people of Ephesus? (We learn the Word of the Lord by reading and studying our Bibles, listening to the preached Word on Sundays, and through fellowship with other believers who can also speak into our lives what they themselves have learned.)

**PRAY:**

Pray that God would give you a love for His Word and motivation to read the Bible every day.



**WEDNESDAY**  
**WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?**

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**THE STORY: ACTS 20:17-24**

The power of God is in the proclamation of the gospel. Paul was used of God to bring the gospel to Ephesus. When Paul first arrived, he asked the men of Ephesus what baptism they received. The men answered, “John’s baptism.” Paul realized this was not sufficient. John’s message was for men to repent of their sins but that was only to prepare them to put their trust in Christ. The gospel is only found through Christ. Salvation comes by the work of Christ alone. His death was for the payment of our sins, and His resurrection signifies His victory over death for all those who believe.

No one can be saved by trusting in John the Baptist or any other teacher. Under John’s baptism, there was no infilling of the Spirit of God because there can be no regeneration through John’s baptism alone. Whether these men were already believers or simply being drawn by God we don’t know for sure. But once they believed the gospel and were baptized into Christ, they were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Acts 4:12 says it this way: “Salvation is found in no one else, for

there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” The result of bringing the gospel to the Ephesians was that many were healed, delivered, and converted, and people repented of every evil practice. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ was exalted, and the Word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

### **TALK ABOUT IT:**

What do we learn from Paul’s farewell address about what he taught to the Ephesians? (He gave his life to the testimony of the gospel of the grace of God [see Acts 20:24].)

Describe Paul’s dependence on God to direct his life. (Paul was actively led by the Holy Spirit and gave his life in service to God.)

### **PRAY:**

Ask God to actively lead you by His Holy Spirit and give you a love for the establishment of your local church.



## **THURSDAY**

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### **THE STORY: ACTS 20:1-6**

Paul moved on with the work of church planting. Paul was not called as a pastor but as an apostle. A pastor shepherds a local congregation. An apostle’s task is to plant and care for local churches. Once the church in Ephesus was strengthened with an accurate understanding of the gospel, with local leaders in place, it was time for Paul to move on to continue his apostolic work. A quick survey of Paul’s life reveals an amazing apostolic mission. A great deal of the advance of the gospel in his generation can be attributed to his ministry. Paul’s journeys through the Mediterranean area saw churches planted in Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. From these key cities the message spread throughout the nations of that area.

**TALK ABOUT IT:**

Why didn't Paul stay with the church at Ephesus? (Paul was called of God to be an apostle, not a pastor. God commissioned Paul to go to the Gentiles with the gospel [see Acts 9:15].)

What effect did Paul's ministry have on the people and leaders? (Paul's ministry was an encouragement to them.)

**PRAY:**

Thank God for the ministry of Paul that spread the gospel to the Gentiles. Thank God that much of our New Testament is comprised of Paul's letters to the Gentile churches.



**FRIDAY  
ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS**

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**THE STORY: ISAIAH 45:21,22**

Jesus is the only Savior to whom we can turn to be saved. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Compare Isaiah's words with those recorded in Acts 4:12 by Luke: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

**TALK ABOUT IT:**

Could the passage in Isaiah be fulfilled by any other person but Jesus? (No, Jesus is the only way to salvation.)

What does this say about all the other religions in the world that follow leaders such as Buddha, Mohammed, Vishnu, or others? (All other paths to salvation, all other gods are false. Jesus is the only way. Even if men who follow other gods do so believing they are correct, those other gods cannot save them.)

**PRAY:**

Thank God for revealing Himself to you. Pray that God would enable every-one in your family to believe and not reject the message of Christ's salvation.