

## PAUL'S WORK IN EPHESUS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: ACTS 19:1–20:24



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

## The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

### Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

**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 or been 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.

**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.

**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.

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### WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

*Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.*

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.



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### ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

**Bible Passage: Isaiah 45:21,22**

#### Connecting the passage to Christ:

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."

#### Questions for reflection:

- 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.)

### SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

#### BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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### ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

*Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?*

#### SOUND DOCTRINE

**Supplies:**

- 100 feet of 1/4" rope cut into 2 foot lengths
- hole punch
- 3"x5" index cards

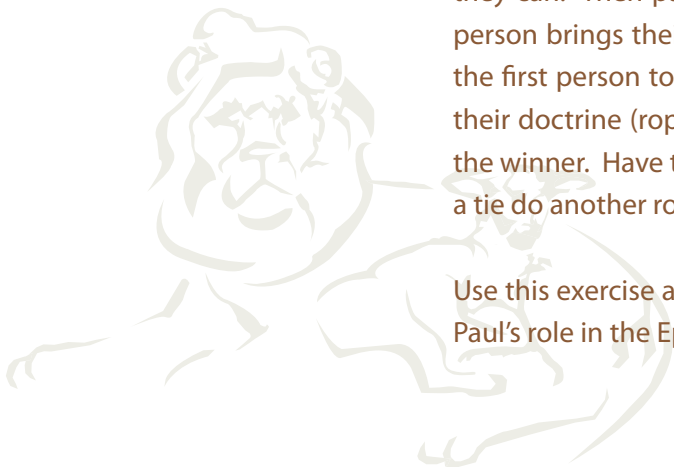
This exercise is designed to demonstrate that an apostle untangles the knots of false doctrine and straightens out the doctrine of churches so that they might carry on with the mission of the Gospel.

Hand out two feet of rope to each student along with a 3"x5" card with a hole punched in the center. Have each student write the word "scripture" on his or her card. Explain that scripture is the test of sound doctrine. Have them pass their ropes through the hole in the index card. Explain to them that if our teaching is tested by the truth of scripture, it is called sound doctrine. Explain to the class that one of the things apostolic leaders do is ensure the local church is being taught sound doctrine.

Now tell the class that you are going to have them introduce doctrinal error. Have each student tie a knot in their rope and then show them how it will not pass through the index card. When we compare doctrine with the Bible we can tell if it is true or false.

Now explain to the children that you are going to have a contest to see who can play the role of the best apostle by untangling the false doctrine represented by the knots. First, give each child one minute to tie their rope into as many knots as they can. Then pass their rope to the person behind them in their class; the last person brings their rope to the front person in their line. Then when you say go, the first person to untangle the knots of error on their rope of teaching and pass their doctrine (rope) through the test of Scripture (the hole in their index card) is the winner. Have them stand as soon as they complete the exercise. In the case of a tie do another round of competition.

Use this exercise as a way to talk about the importance of sound doctrine and the Paul's role in the Ephesians' church to preserve and promote sound doctrine.



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### ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

**Supplies:**

- white paper
- colored pencils

Have the children write encouragement notes to their parents thanking them for guiding them in sound doctrine and truth. Fathers, like apostles to the local church, play the role of keepers of sound doctrine for their families. They are to make sure the Gospel teaching in the home is sound and that their families' faith is not undermined by error.

If the students in the class are young, you can create a generic card with the following words.

Thank you for watching over my life  
and teaching me about God's Word.

Have younger children write their names on the card. Have older children write this or another inscription by themselves.

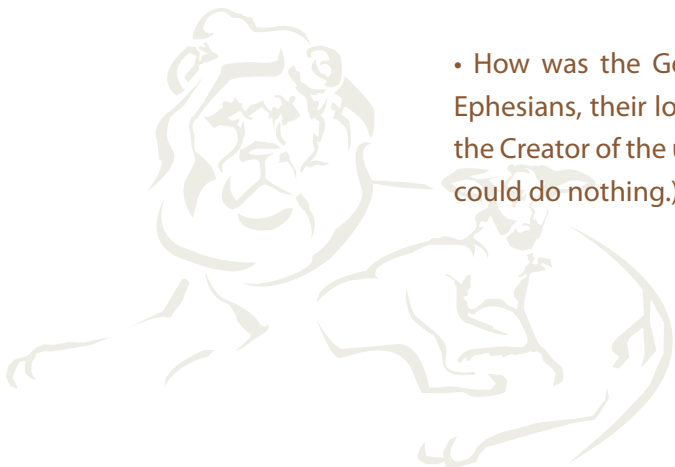
### FALSE GODS

**Supplies:**

costumes as needed

Act out the story of the idol craftsmen in Acts 19:23-27. This need not be the whole riot, but just the speech of Demetrius. This conversation reveals the shallow faith of these idol worshippers. They knew the idols were worthless. They simply wanted to protect their business. They were motivated by greed.

- What effect did the spread of the Gospel in Asia Minor have on the idol craftsmen? (These men were losing business as people converted to Christianity and the truth about their idols was revealed.)
- Were these craftsmen trying to protect their god or their money? (They were trying to protect their money. If people stopped buying their idols they would lose a lot of money.)
- How was the God of the Christians in Ephesus different from Artemis of the Ephesians, their local god? (Jesus, rose again from the dead. He is alive and He is the Creator of the universe. Artemis of the Ephesians was a made up false god who could do nothing.)



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### PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

### IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of Paul baptizing the disciples in Ephesus.

### FOR THE OLDER GRADES

#### WRITE OUT A TESTIMONY

Use the following excerpt from the book of Romans to help the students do the work of an apostle. They are to take the Scripture without looking up the verses and try to correct the errors found in the passage. Make photocopies of the altered passage of Romans for each person in the class (sheet at end of lesson). Have each student work independently or divide into teams. Have them circle anything they think represents false doctrine and explain why. All the alterations to the passage in Romans place the requirement for reconciliation with God on our works not faith. That is probably the greatest error in the church historically and the quickest way to undermine the true Gospel.

Undistorted Romans 3:21-30

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished - he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.



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Distorted Romans 3:21-30

But now a righteousness from **works**, apart from **grace**, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **This good work we perform from leads to** faith in Jesus Christ to all who **do it**. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely **by what they do** through **the example** that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished -- he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who **follow the example of Jesus**. Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of **humility**. For we maintain that a man is justified by **following Christ** apart from observing the law. Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by **works** and the uncircumcised through **the** same works.

Questions to follow exercise:

Why is it false doctrine to change the requirement of salvation from faith to works? (The whole basis of Christianity is that God is holy and we are sinners. Once we sin, we can never become perfect again. If God were to justify sinners on the basis of their own efforts, He would cease to be holy. Since holiness is a foundational part of His character, he would cease to be God.)

Why is a works based salvation appealing to sinful man? (If our salvation is based on our works, we don't need God to be saved; we can save ourselves by our efforts. A works based salvation tears down God and exalts man to the point that man becomes the divine, not God.)



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### A LITTLE BIT MORE

**Apollos** - Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria who was familiar with the teachings of the early Christians and the baptism of John the Baptist. He did not, however, fully understand the Gospel. Two of Paul's fellow workers, Priscilla and Aquilla, after hearing Apollos speak, took him aside to complete his understanding (see Acts 18:24-26). Apollos was an eloquent speaker and had great influence among the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 1:12). Paul considered Apollos a fellow worker, an apostle like himself, (1 Corinthians 3:6-10). Paul urged Apollos to go to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:12) and Apollos is also spoken of favorably in Titus 3:13. Apollos seems to have had an apostolic call as we see him serving with the team of men who cared for the local churches under Paul.





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### ROMANS 3:21-30

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