



Walking Through the Scripture Together

August 31 - September 6, 2008

Surge (suhrij)

Acts 19:1-22

 Latin *surgere* to rush

1. A strong, forward forceful motion, like that of a wave
2. An increase, swelling or rush of something
3. A sudden rush or burst of current or voltage

Text Acts 19:1-22 (TNIV)

Paul in Ephesus

1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples **2** and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied.

4 Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." **5** On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. **6** When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. **7** There were about twelve men in all.

8 Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. **9** But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. **10** This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

11 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, **12** so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

13 Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." **14** Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. **15** [One day] the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" **16** Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

17 When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.

18 Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. **19** A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. **20** In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

21 After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." **22** He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

Thought

Isn't it curious that this passage begins with twelve disciples who had the Word (at least up through John the Baptist) but knew nothing of the Spirit. We would say they were solid evangelicals. The coming immersion in the Spirit that John anticipated along with the arrival of the long-awaited kingdom was a major theme in John's teaching. It's no doubt what these twelve were waiting for. Upon being baptized in the name of Jesus, they get it, full throttle.

And then a kingdom surge hits the entire city.

A surge evidenced in "extraordinary miracles" that include aprons and hankies undoubtedly taken from Paul's tentmaking workbench that are carried to the sick and heal them like Peter's shadow. Hankies drive out shrieking demons.

A surge evidenced in the story buzzing all over town. Seven wannabe exorcists try adding Jesus' name to their repertoire and end up smarting for it. The demon recognizes Jesus and Paul, but only has a beating to dish out to the glitzy pretenders.

A surge evidenced in the pillar of smoke rising from the city. A bonfire of books and incantations not in flames of censorship, but of celebration. At the center of the Great Awakening in this country, Jonathan Edwards wrote of the signs of real revival. He chronicles the howls, the rolling, the exuberance of public demonstration, of power and of miracle as the kingdom breaks in. But he said that it is a changed society that is the ultimate sign of real revival, of revival that has taken root.

And so in Ephesus, the public failure of the seven performers sparks a greater fire of real, personal revival that we would call sanctification and transformation. Ephesus, and all of Asia, are now deeply rocked. Paul had planted himself at what was, as NT Wright observes, a center of power — political, religious, and magical. And he publicly and persistently trumps them all. And when it leads to a joyous public book burning by jubilant hearts set free from darkness, with a price tag in the millions, you may find yourself wanting to whisper a warning to Paul:

Watch out for the riot.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Lean In

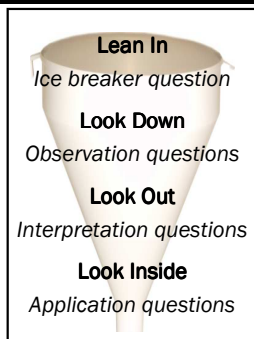
- Share a time when you experienced a very direct, even miraculous, answer to prayer. What happened?

Look Down / Look Out

- Whom did Paul meet when he finally arrived in Ephesus? How did Paul determine where these people were in their spiritual journey?
- What further instruction did he give to them? How did they respond? What did they experience?
- How much time did Paul spend in the synagogue in Ephesus? Considering that in some places Paul didn't make it past week two, what does this say about that synagogue community?
- Why does Paul eventually switch locations? Who went with him? Where did they start meeting? What did Paul do there — and how far reaching was his impact?
- What do you make of these "unusual miracles" God was doing through Paul? What is the ultimate point of the miraculous?
- Summarize what we know of these seven sons of Sceva. Who were they? What were they doing? What do you think motivated them? What do you make of their demonic encounter? What impact did it have on the city of Ephesus? How did it affect people's view of Jesus?

Look Inside

- In what relationships, old or new, might you need to stop, ask questions and listen? How do we combat the tendency to speak into situations before really listening?
- What has your experience been with the miraculous? Do you think the door is still open to miracles — even "unusual" miracles? Why or why not? Does the thought of the miraculous make you excited or nervous or what? Why?
- What in your life needs to "burn" so that you can really live?



Family Discussion Guide

Day One Acts 19:1-7

Through asking questions and listening, Paul was able to find out where these people were in their spiritual journey. How well do you feel listened to and understood by people in your family? At school? At your church or small group? What can help us to be better listeners?

Day Two Acts 19:8-10 & Colossians 1:27-29

Do you typically enjoy discussing and debating current issues with friends, schoolmates, and family, or is it more of an unpleasant experience for you? Why?

Day Three Acts 19:11-12 & Matthew 10:8-10

Do you think miracles can still happen today? Why? Have you ever experienced anything "miraculous"? What happened?

Day Four Acts 19:13-17

What do you learn from this story of the seven sons of Sceva? Do you think we have to worry about demons today? Why or why not?

Day Five Acts 19:18-22 & 2 Corinthians 7:10

Why were the Ephesian disciples burning all those books — isn't book burning a bad thing? Is there anything in your life that you sense needs to "burn" so that you can really live? Where do see a need for change in your life?

Life in Bible Times

Ephesus

Ephesus was on the western coast of Asia Minor, at the mouth of the Cayster River and between the Koresos mountain range and the Aegean Sea. It was founded in the twelfth or eleventh century B.C. by Ionian colonists from Athens as a gateway to the

vast resources of the Asian steppes. In 334 B.C. Alexander the Great captured it at the start of his "drive to the East." From Alexander's death to 133 B.C. it was ruled by the Pergamum kings. With the inevitability of a Roman takeover, Attalus III, the last of these kings, willed the city to Rome at his death; and Ephesus was made the capital of the newly formed Roman province of Asia.

Ephesus relied upon two important assets for its wealth and vitality. The first was its position as a center of trade, linking the Greco-Roman world with the rich hinterland of western Asia Minor. But because of excessive lumbering, charcoal burning, and overgrazing the land, topsoils slipped into streams, streams were turned into marshes, and storm waters raced to the sea laden with silt that choked the river's mouth. The Pergamum kings promoted the maintenance of the harbor facilities at Ephesus, and Rome followed suit. But it was a losing battle against the unchecked erosion of the hinterland. In Paul's day, the zenith of Ephesus's commercial power was long since past.

The second factor the life of Ephesus depended on was the worship of Artemis, the multibreasted goddess of fertility whose temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. King Croesus of nearby Lydia (reigned 564-546 B.C.) had built the first temple to Artemis one and a half miles northeast of Ephesus. It was rebuilt on the same site in the fourth century B.C. after a fire, its size being almost four times that of the Parthenon at Athens. With the decline of its commerce, the prosperity of Ephesus became more and more dependent on the tourist and pilgrim trade associated with the temple and cult of Artemis. Around it swarmed all sorts of tradesmen and hucksters who made their living by supplying visitors with food and lodging, dedicatory offerings, and souvenirs. The temple of Artemis was also a major treasury and bank of the ancient world, where merchants, kings, and even cities made deposits, and where their money could be kept safe under the protection of deity. At the time of Paul's arrival, the people of Ephesus were becoming conscious of the precariousness of their position as a commercial and political center of Asia.



details, details...

While Apollos was at Corinth

Paul ultimately spends close to three years in Ephesus (see Acts 20:31). Aside from a few notable events during this time (the sons of Sceva, the riot) Luke is very sparing in the details of all that happened during this time. Paul's letters to the Corinthians fill in some of the gaps for us. It was during this three year period that troubles in the church in Corinth really heated up. Members of the church showed up in Ephesus reporting on the problems and also presenting a letter filled with questions and concerns. Paul wrote what we know as 1 Corinthians in response. He evidently followed up with a quick visit to Corinth — a visit Paul called "painful." He then perhaps wrote another brief letter, which we don't possess, and then yet another letter we know as 2 Corinthians.

In the lecture hall of Tyrannus

When opposition to "the Way" arose within the synagogue, he withdrew and continued to minister for two more years at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This was probably the hall of a local philosopher named Tyrannus ("Tyrant") or one rented out to traveling philosophers by a landlord of that name. Since it is difficult to think of any parent naming his or her child "Tyrant," the name must have been a nickname.

Seven sons of Sceva

The use of magical names in incantations to exorcise evil spirits was common in the ancient world, and it seems to have been especially prominent at Ephesus. In addition, Jewish practitioners of magic were highly esteemed in antiquity, for they were believed to have command of particularly effective spells. The great reluctance of the Jews to pronounce the divine name was known among the ancients and often misinterpreted according to magical principles.