

Life Group Lesson

40 Days with the Holy Spirit • Week of July 3

Introduction

The incredible journeys of the apostle Paul (and company) recorded in the book of Acts is nearly like looking in the rearview mirror. When you stop and think about it, it has not that been that long ago. The more we read God's Word, the less of a distance we feel from the real-life stories of faithful men and women. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8); so the Lord is always current. Stepping into the travels of Paul's work allows us to see how this man had his work cut out for him as he took the message of Christ into the world. We are part of the fruit from Paul's missionary journeys into Asia Minor and Europe.

Thanks to Dr. Luke, author of the gospel of Luke and the Book of Act, we read 'about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven' – how Jesus repeatedly assured His apostles that 'in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit' (see Acts 1:1-5). The Holy Spirit is key to the growth of the Church, as well as the growth (our maturity) of those who are part of His Church. Just as the beautiful message of Christ exploded as the Holy Spirit was poured out on fully-devoted believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) – the Good News of Christ still takes ground in this world as common men and women simply choose to follow our Lord's commission (see Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8).

The moment you and I choose to follow Christ, God's Spirit will give us a desire to be on-mission in our daily lives. Some of us, like the apostles, may feel a call to go into full-time ministry. Yet, know that hardship and suffering is part of the journey. We may get discouraged and ask: "Did I really hear from God? I am not sure what direction to take. Right now, I don't feel qualified to lead myself, let alone anyone else." We will not always have details spelled out; but the Bible clearly tells us that following Christ is not about us – It's about Jesus! In fact, Jesus, who had the greatest assignment over His life, told the disciples that "the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later He would rise from the dead"—going on to say, you too must 'deny self' and take up a cross. (Mark 8:31, 34).

Background

Since the conversion of Paul (formerly Saul of Tarsus, see Acts 9:1-19) Paul knew God had an unshakable assignment over his life. Paul was faithful. And studying Paul's life through the book of Acts and the epistles he wrote, it is clear to see that Paul had a heart for Christ – a deep resolve to do whatever it took to win people to Jesus Christ. On his third missionary journey, after being away several years evangelizing, church planting, strengthening believers, and teaching – Paul was on his way back to Jerusalem and wanted to get there, if possible, by Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Because of this, Paul decided not to go to his beloved Ephesus on his way back (inbound travels of the third journey if you are using a map) but sends a message to the elders at Ephesus asking for them to meet him in Miletus (Acts 20:17).

Paul loves the church at Ephesus and says, "I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears... I never shrank back from telling you what you need to hear.... I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike..." and now I am bound by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. Paul understands that nothing but jail and suffering lies ahead; yet he declares: "But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me be by the Lord Jesus – the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Paul knows that hardship is part of the journey.

Reading the Text

Read Acts 20:13-38

1. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?
2. What are you going to do about it?
3. How can we help you?

40 DAYS WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Text: Acts 20:16-36

Plain Truth:

Knowing _____ enables us to say _____ to the _____ and _____ to all the other _____.

1. The Holy Spirit will never _____.
2. The _____ doesn't _____ over our problems.
3. The _____ answers when you _____ wholeheartedly.

In Closing

Knowing Scripture is crucial. It's how you stay moving forward on God's path. If you are discouraged today, say: "Come Holy Spirit." When you are uncertain of the next step, say: Holy Spirit guide me. The Holy Spirit will never contradict Scripture. Study God's Word, reflect upon it and live into what the Lord has said in His Word. We must turn from sin and live into the light of His Presence. For example, Jesus did not condemn the woman caught in the act of adultery, yet, once He forgave her, the Lord told her to 'go and sin no more' (John 8:11). The Holy Spirit will not condone sin, but will convict us of sin (John 16:8). Also, the Holy Spirit does not obsess over our problems. Instead, God uses suffering to grow us. Pruning is painful but His grace will sustain if you seek to follow Him. Seek the Lord with your whole heart. He loves you (see Jeremiah 29:13).

Close in a Time of Prayer asking:

How can I pray for my fellow Life Group participants this week?

One Year Bible Readings

July 3: 2 Kings 22:3-23:30, Acts 21:37-22:16, Psalm 1:1-6, Proverbs 18:11-12

July 4: 2 Kings 23:31-25:30, Acts 22:17-23:10, Psalm 2:1-12, Proverbs 18:13

July 5: 1 Chronicles 1:1-2:17, Acts 23:11-35, Psalm 3:1-8, Proverbs 18:14-15

July 6: 1 Chronicles 2:18-4:4, Acts 24:1-27, Psalm 4:1-8, Proverbs 18:16-18

July 7: 1 Chronicles 4:5-5:17, Acts 25:1-27, Psalm 5:1-12, Proverbs 18:19

July 8: 1 Chronicles 5:18-6:81, Acts 26:1-32, Psalm 6:1-10, Proverbs 18:20-21

July 9: 1 Chronicles 7:1-8:40, Acts 27:1-20, Psalm 7:1-17, Proverbs 18:22