



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

VOLUME THREE, PART TWO
ACTS 17 - 20

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A small ember faintly glowed in Jerusalem. A carpenter, seeming to be a common man, collected a few faithful followers showing them what life was meant to look like. But as soon as these followers caught His brilliant vision, their joy and hope would seem crushed upon a Roman cross, because the powers and principalities would stop at nothing to snuff out His beauty and goodness. This is not how most stories begin . . .

But just when it seemed as if the shadows had grown to replace the light, a tomb is robbed of it's death and a risen Savior illuminates hope. Now these followers of Jesus are called to pick up and carry the vision and movement forward into the darkness of this world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they carry the spark of Jesus' vision outward, proclaiming this Good News of a King on a Cross to their city, their people, their enemies, and to the ends of the earth. And what began as a glowing ember in an upper room would gather into a blazing and consuming firestorm of witness across time and space, telling the tale of this carpenter, this risen Savior, the very Son of God.

These are the Acts of the Apostles.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SESSION ONE - 07

Acts 17:1-15

SESSION TWO - 15

Acts 17:16-34

SESSION THREE - 23

Acts 18:1-23

SESSION FOUR - 31

Acts 18:24-19:10

SESSION FIVE - 39

Acts 19:11-20

SESSION SIX - 47

Acts 19:21-41

SESSION SEVEN - 55

Acts 20:1-37

NAME



Rome

MACEDONIA

Philippi

Berea

Thessalonica

Corinth

ACHAIA



BITHYNIA

PONTUS

GALATIA

ASIA

CAPPADOCIA

LYCAONIA

Antioch

Iconium

Lystra

Antioch

SYRIA

Damascus

Caesarea

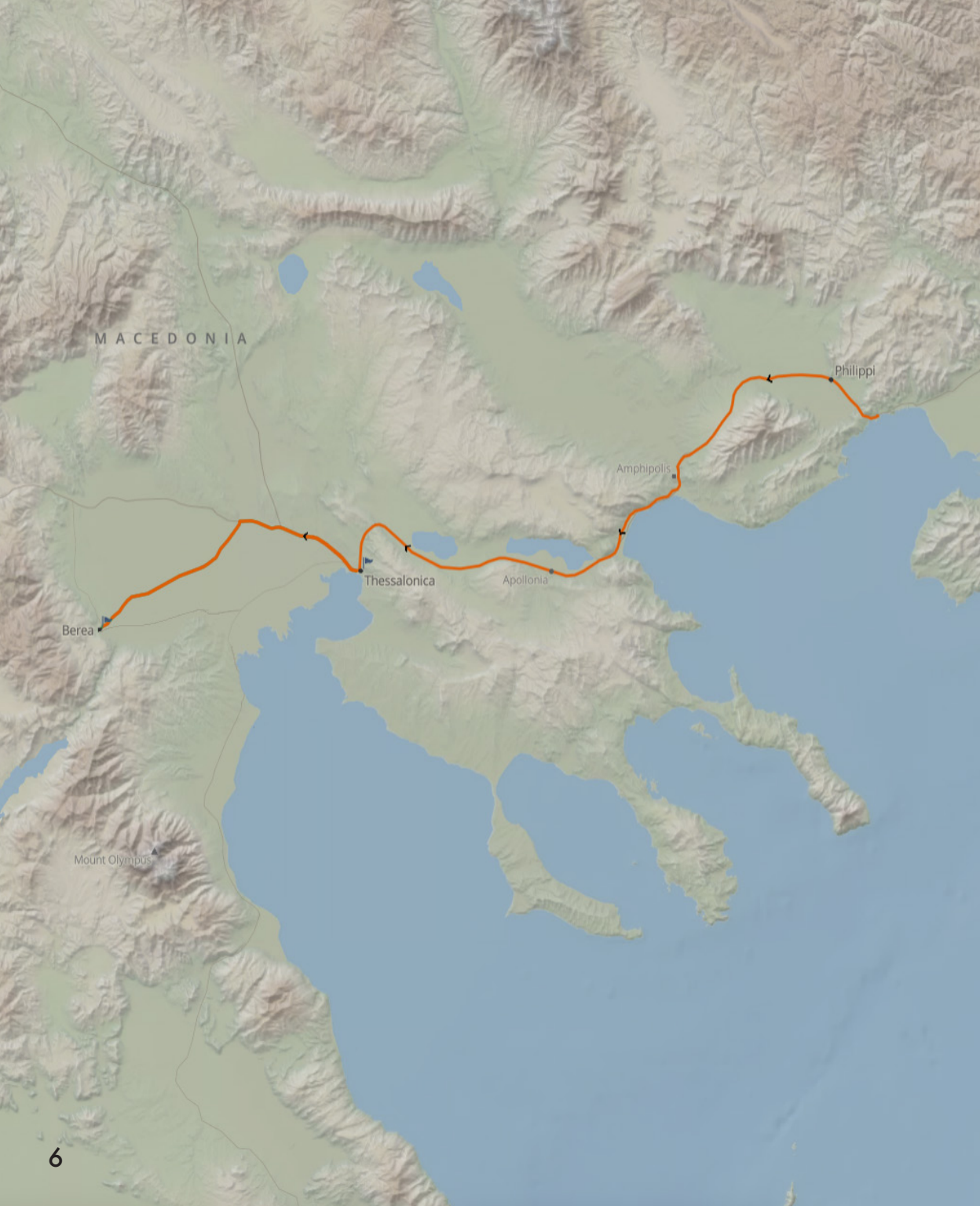
Jerusalem

JUDEA

NABATEA

Pergamum

Ephesus



MACEDONIA

Philippi

Amphipolis

Thessalonica

Apollonia

Berea

Mount Olympus

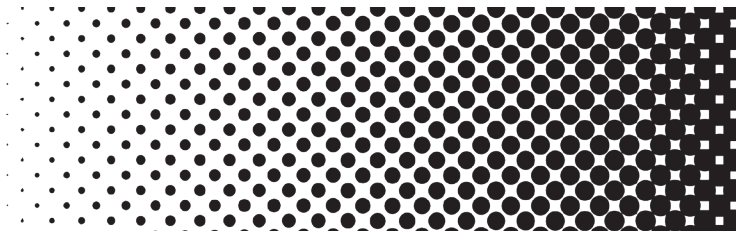


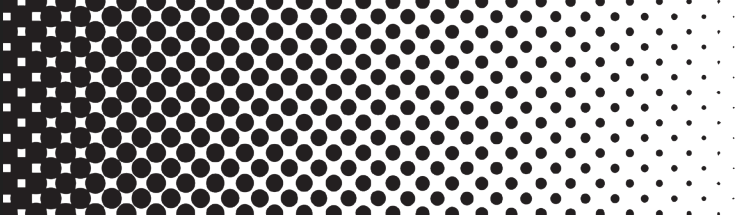
SESSION ONE

Acts 17:1-15

SESSION 1

¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” ⁴And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, ⁷and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” ⁸And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when





they heard these things. ⁹And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

¹⁰The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹²Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men. ¹³But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds. ¹⁴Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

INTRODUCTION

The story continues in Macedonia, where Paul, Timothy and Silas proclaim the good news that Jesus is the Christ. In Thessalonica and then Berea, two cities fifty miles apart, we encounter very different responses to this teaching. The ongoing pattern of both opposition and belief echoes previous chapters as persecution pushes the expansion of the gospel closer to the ends of the earth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Paul's custom when entering a new city? Where else have we seen this pattern in Acts? How have responses to this custom differed from city to city?
2. Who did the Jews expect the Messiah to be? Why might it have been difficult for these Jews in Thessalonica to reconcile their expectations with a messiah who would suffer and rise from the dead? Do your expectations of the Savior align with Biblical truth?
3. Why was it necessary for the Christ to suffer? How do passages like Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53 help us understand the necessity of Christ's suffering?
4. Thessalonica was a Roman "free city," meaning it was not directly controlled by Roman authorities and allowed for a level of self-governing that other cities did not have. How might this distinction have influenced how the local authorities responded to the mob and its accusations?
5. Which motivations (fear, jealousy, loyalty, etc.) do you perceive in the actions of the different groups portrayed in these verses? Do you see similar motives driving actions in today's cultural or religious conflicts?

6. Are there other passages in the Bible where you see the kingship of Jesus and earthly authorities at odds? Have you ever been in a situation where your faith conflicted with another authority, like the government, an employer or with family? What did you do?
7. Jason shows hospitality, then finds himself in the middle of a riot and forced to pay security to the authorities. How has following Christ cost you? What helps you stay faithful when obedience is difficult?
8. What does it mean to be noble like the Bereans? How open are you to new ideas, especially those that challenge your current beliefs?
9. What does your current Bible reading habit look like? How does regular time in Scripture shape your daily decisions or attitude?
10. The Thessalonian Jews pursued Paul out of jealousy (v13), just as others did in Acts 14:19. Have you ever acted irrationally because of jealousy? What were the results?

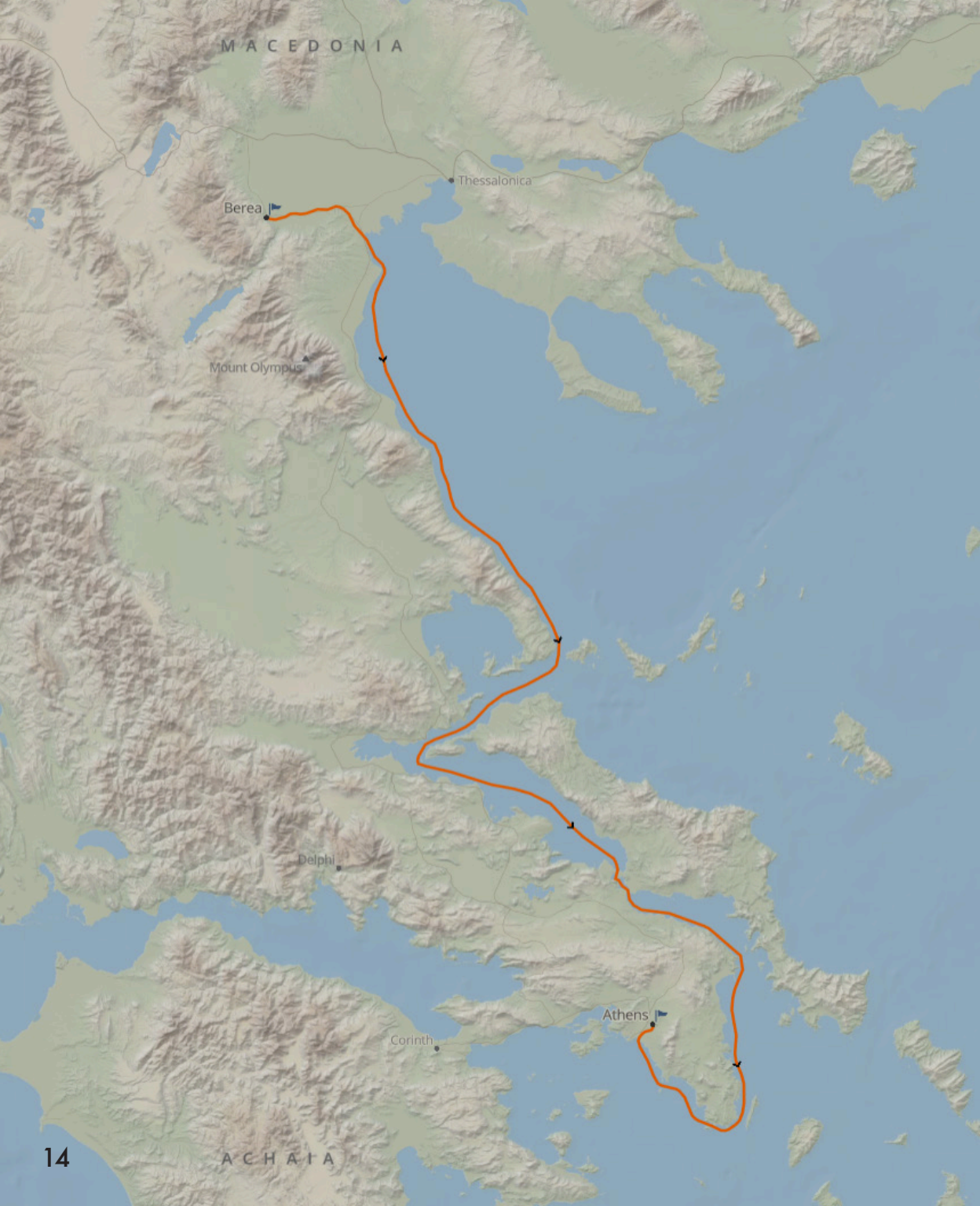
TENDING THE FIRE



This passage reminds us how deeply rooted our sin nature is. It also points us to the better inheritance we have in Jesus, who faced opposition and suffering to bring us into God's family. Praise God for His grace!

While Paul is central in this passage, we also meet faithful men like Jason. These believers aren't well known, even though they played crucial roles in the mission of the gospel. Jason and others showed up with hospitality, courage, financial sacrifice and support in times of adversity. Many of their names are not recorded, but their faithfulness is seen and honored by God. The same is true for us. You may not face persecution like Paul did, but your daily faithfulness, your loyalty to Jesus, your generosity and your presence in Christian community matter deeply. God sees it.

Proverbs 17:17 tells us, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." In this passage, "the brothers" are mentioned several times. They are the ones who shelter Paul, help him escape danger and hold the gospel community together. **Who are those people for you? Who might need you to be that kind of brother or sister? Small groups are a great place to build these relationships. If you're already in a group, invite someone new to join you. If you're not, take that next step. Reach out and get connected.** The church needs more "brothers for adversity," and that might just be you this week.



MACEDONIA

Thessalonica

Berea

Mount Olympus

Delphi

Corinth

Athens

ACHAIA



SESSION TWO

Acts 17:16-34

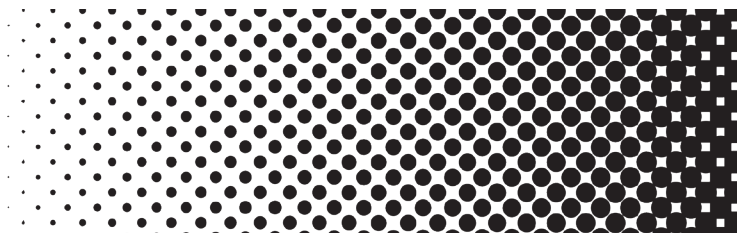
SESSION 2

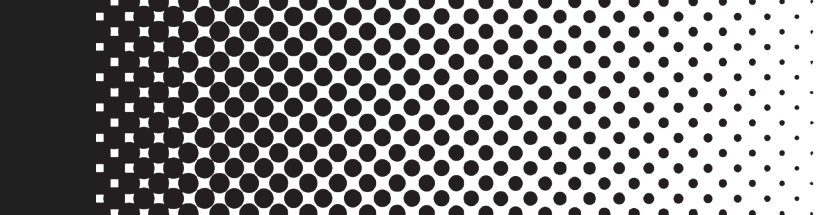
¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed





anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸for

“ ‘In him we live and move and have our being’;
as even some of your own poets have said,
“ ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

²⁹Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.”

³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

INTRODUCTION

Though not specifically intending to go there, Paul is thrust into what could be the “thought center” of the ancient world. Athens had been home to the likes of Socrates and Plato, and other thinkers had come there to leave their mark on the known world like Aristotle, Epicurus, and Zeno. Whether in the synagogue or the marketplace, Paul is ready to respond to pagan understandings of the world and humanity, and he is unwavering as he proclaims a resurrected Jesus through whom they can be saved.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. It is clear that Paul is very observant and paying attention to his surroundings for the purposes of his faith. How observant are you? Explain.
2. In a sense, we can read Acts 17:16 and think back to Acts 15:23-29. How does this false worship look in a modern culture? Do you recognize it? Are you as “provoked” as Paul at the site of idol worship? Explain.
3. Summarize Paul’s speech in Acts 17:22-31 into simple points. Why these ideas?
4. In Acts 17:21, Luke had described what the culture of Athens was all about. How is our culture similar? How does Paul combat this idea?

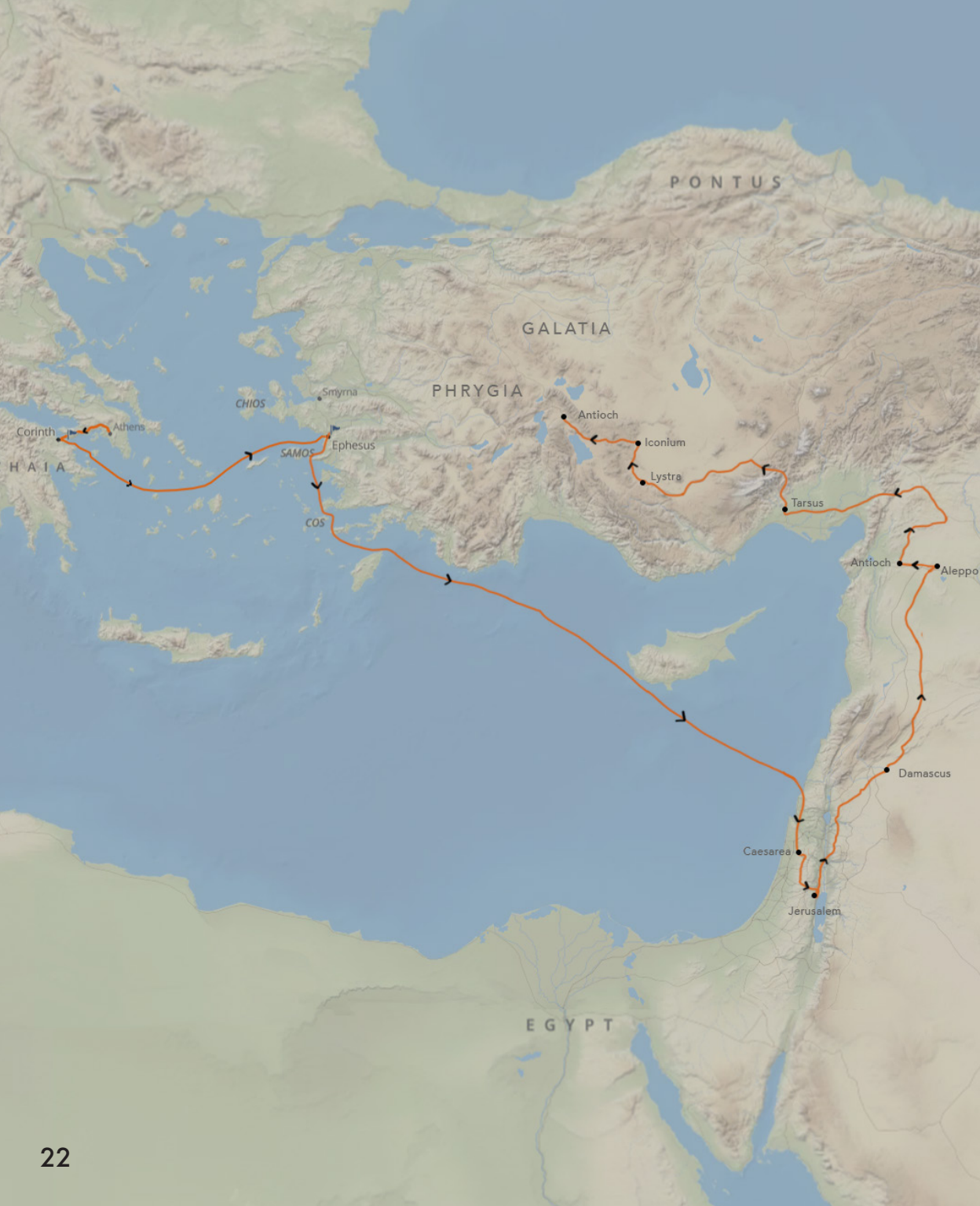
5. Paul uses quotes from ancient poets. Why would he do this? Why would he base his argument on his observation of a random altar in Athens?
6. Paul seems to be linking repentance with “knowledge” or somehow removing ignorance? What do you think he means? What is he saying that they are ignorant about? How might repentance lead to this kind of knowledge?
7. Read Romans 1:18-23. Paul wrote these words much later than this event in Athens. How does it connect with his speech in Acts 17?
8. Paul is accused of preaching “foreign divinities” in Athens. When we proclaim Jesus today, how is our situation similar? What can we observe from Paul’s approach that can help us today?

TENDING THE FIRE



Paul and his friends have been bringing the gospel to the Gentile world mostly through the synagogue using the spread of the Israelites throughout the known world. Now Paul arrives at the heart of pagan thought. The marketplace is the new target. The marketplace is where culture happens. It is where we exchange goods and ideas. It is also where Paul finds false worship everywhere and it is upsetting. To him, false worship is ignorance, which is why he would point to the altar of the “unknown god” and explain how they are missing the true Creator, Sustainer and Judge.

Today, the marketplace of ideas is found in the supermarket, the workplace, schools as well as places like Amazon, X, and Instagram. We, as Christians, are constantly operating within that marketplace. **How are we doing? Are we challenging the marketplace’s view of the world? Are we bold like Paul, proclaiming the resurrected Jesus as the only means of salvation? Do we even consider our faith as we enter the marketplace of our jobs, schools, or even our family environment?**





SESSION THREE

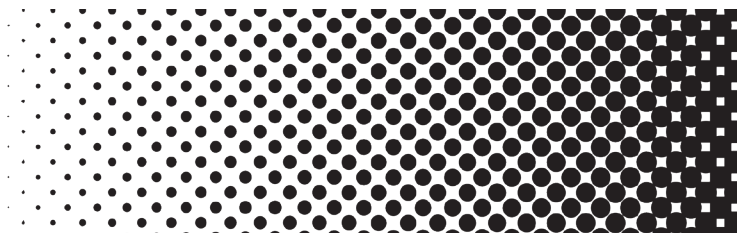
Acts 18:1-23

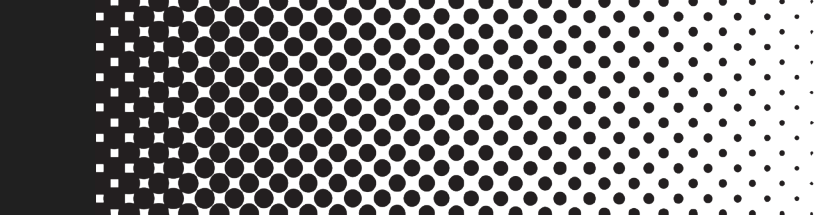
SESSION 3

¹After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, ³and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. ⁶And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” ⁷And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. ⁹And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” ¹¹And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹²But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a





united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, ¹³saying, “This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law.” ¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, O Jews, I would have reason to accept your complaint. ¹⁵But since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these things.” ¹⁶And he drove them from the tribunal. ¹⁷And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of this.

¹⁸After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. ¹⁹And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰When they asked him to stay for a longer period, he declined. ²¹But on taking leave of them he said, “I will return to you if God wills,” and he set sail from Ephesus.

²²When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch. ²³After spending some time there, he departed and went from one place to the next through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

INTRODUCTION

Paul continues to claim that Jesus is the Christ to his fellow Israelites regardless of how far he is from Jerusalem. Now in Corinth he has found new allies, and continues to meet both resistance and acceptance, sometimes from unexpected people.

Well, maybe not so unexpected since the Lord had promised him protection allowing him to stay for a year and a half.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Compare Acts 18:13 with Acts 17:19-20. What is the accusation in each case and from whom?
2. Read Acts 18:24-26, Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, and 2 Timothy 4:19. What do these references to Priscilla and Aquila tell us about their involvement with Paul?
3. Go back and read Acts 13:46-51 and compare to Acts 18:4-6. Has Paul changed his method along the way? Why/why not?
4. Read Ezekiel 33:1-5. What is the purpose of the watchman? How is Paul identifying his role in a similar way?
5. Have you had a role in your life where, like a watchman, you were supposed to provide information that would protect people? Explain. What were the consequences of failing to do your job well?

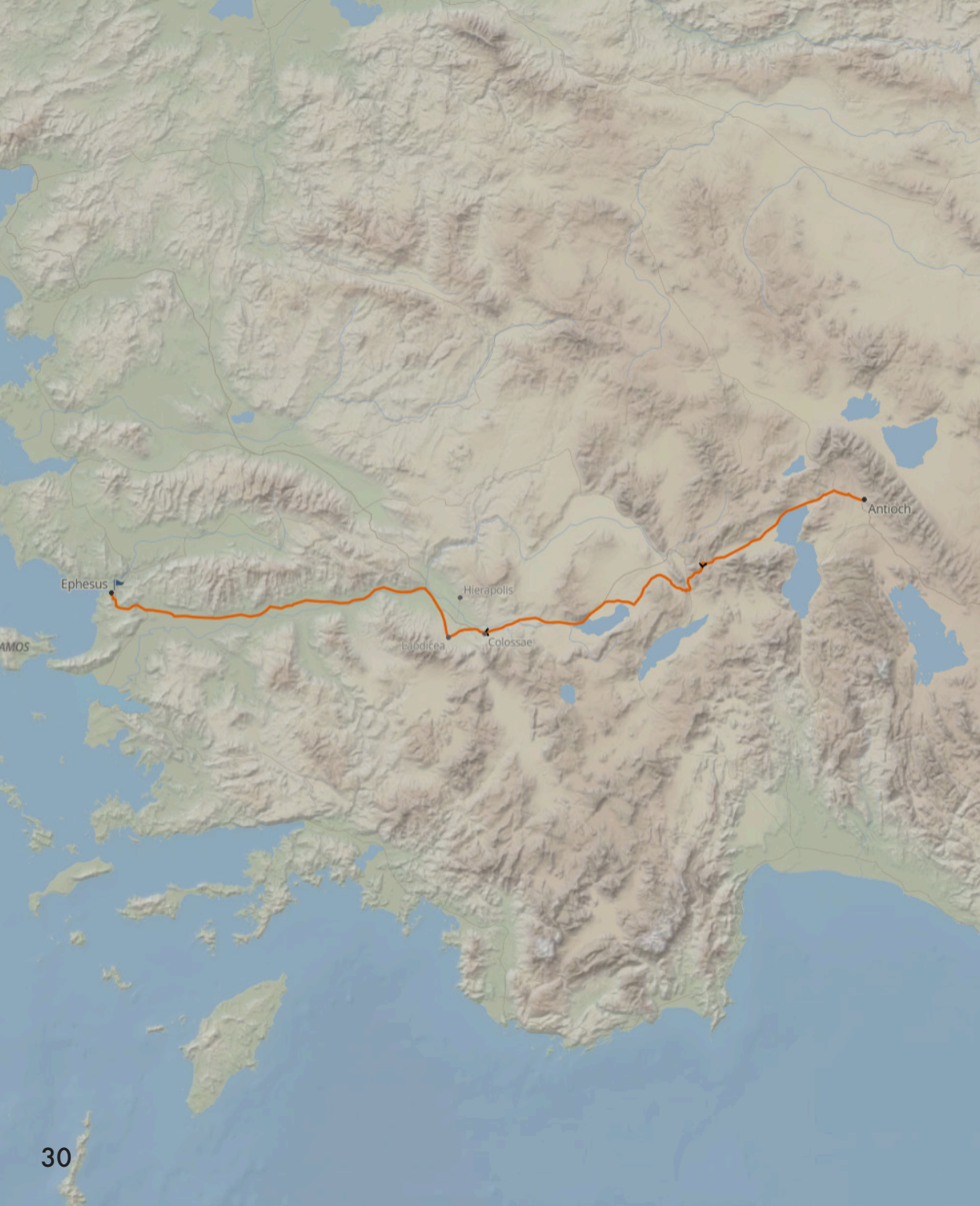
6. Read Luke 1:13, 30 and Luke 5:10. What is common in the situations?
7. The statement “Do not be afraid, . . . for I am with you” has Old Testament resonance as well. Read Jeremiah 1:4-10. Paul knows his scripture, so why might this be encouraging? Why might it also be challenging?
8. Consider Acts 18:12-16 in light of Paul’s vision in Acts 18:9-10. What is the irony of how Paul was protected and what did it mean for the Christian faith at least in the province of Achaëa?
9. Read Matthew 10:16-19 and describe how this promise has come true in Paul’s journey so far. Do you think this applies to our culture today? Explain.

TENDING THE FIRE



It can be a scary thing to proclaim Jesus to people who do not know Him, but how can a Christian who truly loves God and loves others avoid such proclamation? If Paul has shown us anything, it is that the proclamation of Jesus as Lord comes with consequences, but they are worth it! Furthermore, if Luke has revealed anything to us in the book of Acts, it is that God is shepherding this proclamation through His Spirit. He protects through His Spirit, just like He empowers through His Spirit. Sometimes new gospel partners arise to help like Aquila and Priscilla. Sometimes pagan magistrates are used to protect gospel proclamation. Even if you don't hear Jesus' audible voice "do not fear," should we be afraid? Is that the posture of a image-bearer of God who has been saved from Satan, sin, and death through Jesus' cross? We are like watchmen on a wall, but the good news is we are proclaiming our ultimate enemies' defeat through our King.

What are you most afraid of when you think about living out this faith? Are your fears warranted? Who can help you build your faith and move you toward trusting in Jesus through your fears?

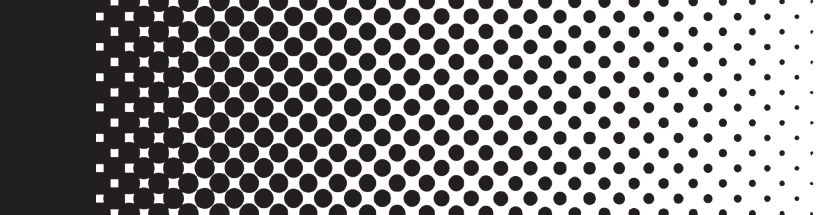




SESSION FOUR
Acts 18:24 - 19:10

SESSION 4

²⁴Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.



^{19:1}And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ²And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” ³And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” ⁴And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷There were about twelve men in all. ⁸And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

INTRODUCTION

This passage is set in Ephesus, a city known for its intellectual, spiritual and cultural influence. Here, we meet a learned man named Apollos and a group of John the Baptist's disciples. Both receive a fuller understanding of the gospel as the Holy Spirit continues empowering and refining Christ's witnesses, advancing the Acts 1:8 commission.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do you learn about Apollos in this passage? How might these details make him particularly well-suited to share the gospel in Ephesus?
2. In a culture that values eloquence, like ancient Greece or ours today, how important do you think eloquence is when sharing the gospel? Consider these verses: Exodus 4:10, Psalms 139:23-24, James 1:17.
3. Apollos “had been instructed in the way of the Lord.” What does this mean? What do Priscilla and Aquila share with Apollos that makes his teaching about Jesus more accurate?
4. Priscilla and Aquila address Apollos privately. How does this biblical example align with your personal experience of iron sharpening iron? (Proverbs 27:17) How might this contrast with the way correction or critique is offered in the church or by the world today?
5. There is a theme of refining doctrinal accuracy in this passage. How do you personally draw the line between essential doctrine and areas of liberty for Christians?

6. What is the Baptism of John? Why do you think Paul identifies this distinction? (Luke 3:16, Acts 1:5)
7. Are there similarities you can identify in Peter's role in Cornelius' faith (Acts 10) and Paul's role with the twelve disciples here in Ephesus? What is required of Peter and Paul for the Lord to accomplish His purposes?
8. Who is the Holy Spirit? How does your understanding of the Holy Spirit shape your daily walk with God?
9. The hall of Tyrannus is a building likely owned by a wealthy Christian and used for ministry purposes in off-hours. Recall the spirit of generous unity in Acts 2:44-45. What cultural values might make this type of sharing more difficult today?

TENDING THE FIRE



Most of us don't enjoy going to the doctor, but a good doctor asks questions to get to the heart of the issue. When we respond truthfully and with humility, we're more likely to receive the right diagnosis and begin healing. Similarly, the Lord, our Great Physician, often works through others to examine and refine our faith.

We see this as Priscilla and Aquila privately share a more accurate understanding of God's way with the humble and receptive Apollos. This leads him with powerful boldness into Achaian ministry opportunities. Paul asks direct questions of the disciples of John in Ephesus and their honest answers open the door for transformation through the Holy Spirit.

Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to refine your faith through Scripture, through community and through your sincere humility? Growth comes when we are willing to be teachable. This week, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you (John 14:26), then receive what you learn, trusting God to conform you more and more to the image of Christ.

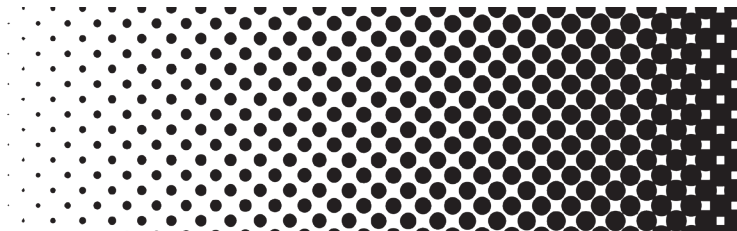


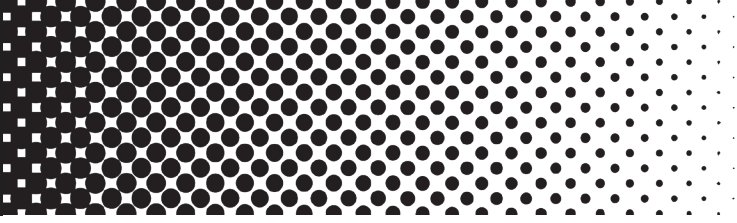


SESSION FIVE
Acts 19:11-20

SESSION 5

¹¹And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” ¹⁴Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. ¹⁵But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” ¹⁶And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.





¹⁷And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. ¹⁸Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

INTRODUCTION

In the ancient world, there was power in names. As an example, archaeologists in Egypt have unearthed troves of broken pottery and other vessels that were inscribed with the names of a Pharaoh's enemies. They would break the pieces with the enemy names ("Execration texts") to perform a kind of magical curse upon their enemies. How one used a name was powerful, which helps explain what is happening in today's text.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Is there still power in “names” in today’s culture? Can that power be misused? Explain.
2. Considering the text for today, read Isaiah 45:22-23 and Philippians 2:9-10. How do these verses give specific meaning to God’s name?
3. Read Luke 8:43-48 and Acts 5:14-16 along side Acts 19:11-12. Why would Luke make sure to include these stories in Luke-Acts?
4. Why would Luke tell us about “healing” items? Have you ever had a church or organization promote some kind of item that was supposed to have healing properties? Read Acts 8:18-23 and discuss how Peter might respond to treating God’s goodness as if it were like a talisman or lucky charm.
5. When you read stories of spirits like this, are you more skeptical or convinced? A materialist explains all of reality through the five senses. On a scale from one to ten, how much are you a materialist? Explain.

6. What do you know about exorcisms? Why does it fit within the biblical accounts? What kind of worldview is required to believe that spirits, spirit possession, and spirit oppression are real?
7. Read Luke 11:14-23. How do Jesus' words inform our understanding of exorcism? How does it relate to our session's text?
8. Place Acts 19:11-12 up against Acts 19:13-16. What does Luke want his readers to see? How is Paul's use of Jesus' name different than the sons of Sceva?
9. How can Acts 19:11-16 inform how we read Exodus 20:7?
10. How might the conclusion of this story in Acts 19:17-20 have implications for us?

TENDING THE FIRE



Have you ever prayed to God asking favor to win the lottery? Or maybe you asked if He would grant you the winning raffle ticket for that new TV or VR headset. God does bless His people, but there is a need for care when we “take” His name with us. Too often we reduce the “taking of the LORD’s name” to using “bad words” when in reality, we must be thinking about how we carry His name with us all of the time. Do we consider what it means to be called children of God? Do we reduce faithfulness to not saying the dreaded “GD” or “JC”? Discipleship is so much more. God’s people have access to His power through the Spirit who enables us to witness to His glory, His goodness. This session, we see the sons of Sceva attempting to use power through a name, in this case the name of Jesus. It is truly carrying His name in vain. They are exorcists-for-hire. They want the benefits of the LORD’s name without the desire to act like His children, and they don’t seem interested in proclaiming Him for any other reason. Increasing the irony, they are supposed to know God and are said to come from a priestly line. What do they receive? A beat down.

How can you better carry the name of the LORD, your identity as His child, this week? At work, in your home, in the public eye do you look like a child of the King? Ask someone close to you to give you honest feedback.



Ephesus

Miletus



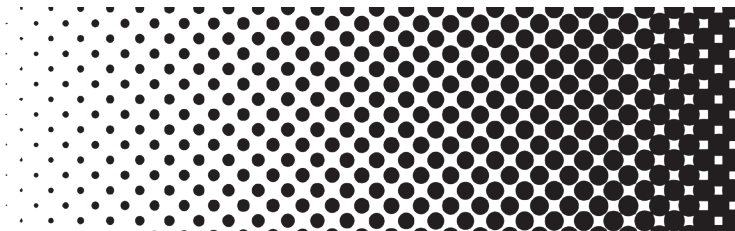
SESSION SIX
Acts 19:21-41

SESSION 6

²¹Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” ²²And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

²³About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

²⁸When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s companions in travel. ³⁰But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of





his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.

³²Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. ³⁴But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

³⁵And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? ³⁶Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. ³⁸If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. ⁴⁰For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” ⁴¹And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

INTRODUCTION

The temple to Artemis (or Diana) of the Ephesians represents one of the great wonders of the ancient world. Saying there is another King other than Caesar is bad. Saying the gods that someone worships do not exist is bad. But imagine if the claims being made start to affect a person's wealth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. “Resolved through the Spirit” seems like a very loaded phrase. What do you think it means? How do you “resolve through the Spirit” when it comes to everyday decisions?
2. Compare the story of Demetrius with the story of the Philippian slave girl in Acts 16. Have you ever had something you did in faith impact your wealth? Explain.
3. What can we conclude from what the Ephesian craftsman spoke in Acts 19:26? Now, go back and read Acts 18:9-10. How does this speak to the process of proclaiming the gospel?
4. Word can travel very fast, even in the ancient world. How might this inform our actions and words in places like school, workplace and even more so in virtual places like social media?

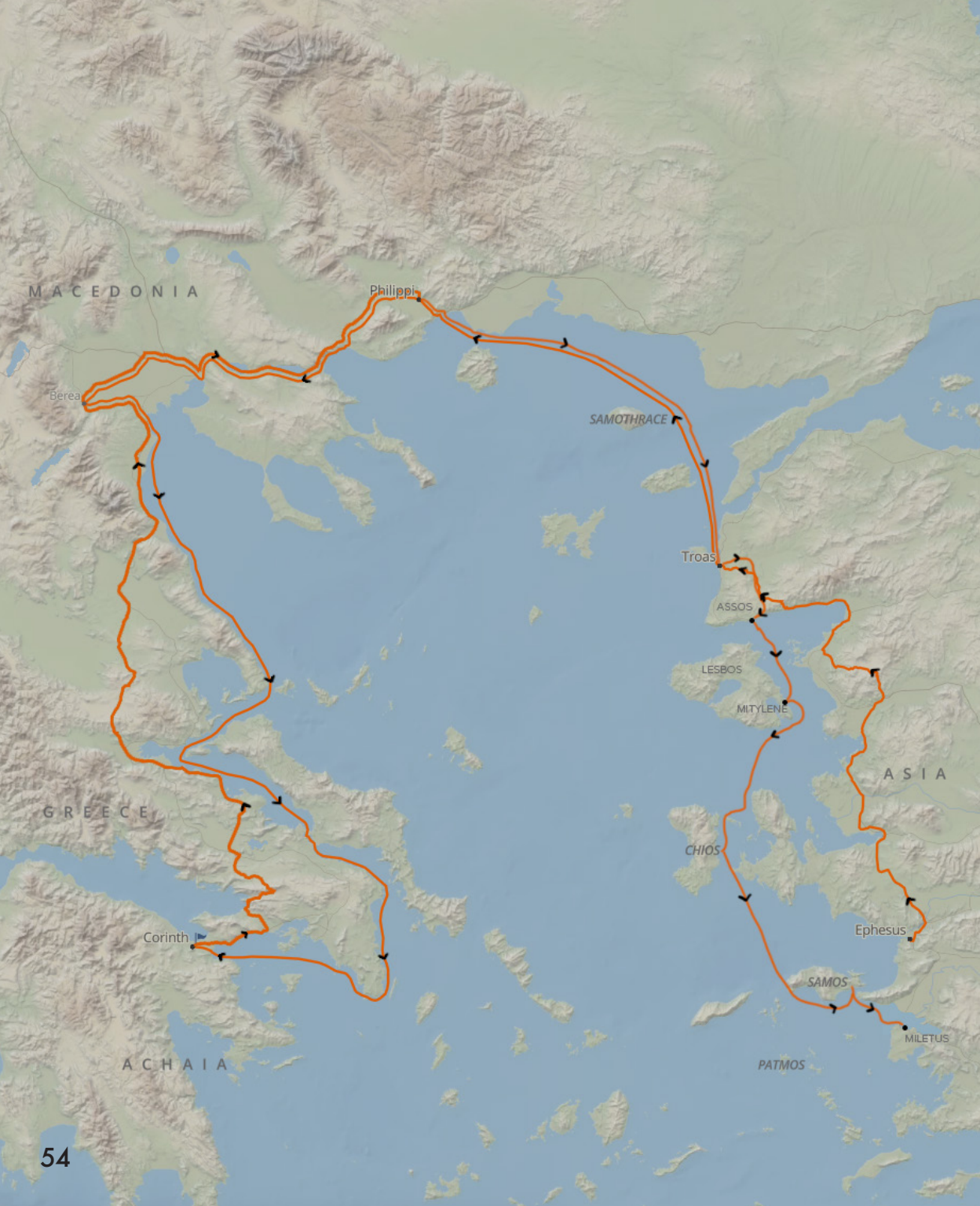
5. After reading Acts 19:27-28, in a similar way, have you ever experienced economics and religion tied together in our culture? Explain.
6. “Asiarchs” in Acts 19:31 are leaders from the region of Asia. The text calls them “friends” of Paul. In this passage, Luke also talks about craftsmen, workmen, a city clerk and proconsuls. What does this say about Paul and his message? How do you look at those who are socioeconomically different from you?
7. Consider the opposition and suffering Paul has experienced in Lystra (Acts 14), Philippi (Acts 16) ,and Corinth (Acts 18). How does the passage this session continue the theme? Why might this be meaningful to us? What can prepare us for such things?
8. In Acts 19:35-41, we have another pagan protecting Paul. Compare the actions of the unnamed city clerk with the actions of Gallio in Acts 18:11-16. What do you think of Paul’s pagan protectors arguments?

TENDING THE FIRE



There is one Greek word that is translated “sacred stone that fell from the sky” or in other Bible translations “the image that fell from heaven.” In an overly literal sense the one word translates “fallen from Zeus.” It was part of the attraction. It explains the image that sat in the Temple of Artemis. Some say it could be a meteorite or a volcanic stone or maybe it was simply the way ancient people understood the statue of the god herself. But the real contention from the people of Ephesus is more about something else that people worship—wealth. This great temple brought people, and people brought wealth. When the comfort and pleasure we find in our financial position is threatened, watch out! The interesting thing is that Paul is witnessing to Another that came from heaven who calls His people to give rather than receive. He would say not only that we should give to the poor, but blessed are the poor.

How do you see your material possessions? Are you generous? Do you protect your wealth like a pagan or give it like one who follows Jesus? Have someone you trust help you be accountable.



MACEDONIA

Philippi

Berea

SAMOTHRACE

Troas

ASSOS

LESBOS

MITYLENE

ASIA

GREECE

CHIOS

Ephesus

SAMOS

PATMOS

MILETUS

ACHAIA

Corinth



SESSION SEVEN

Acts 20:1-37

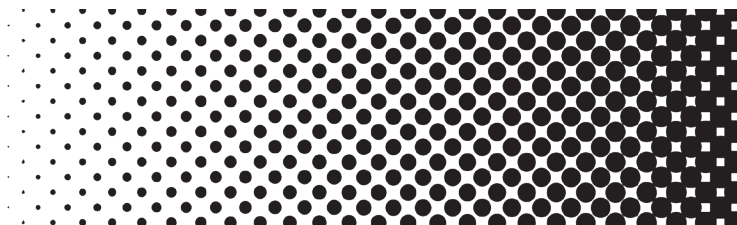
SESSION 7

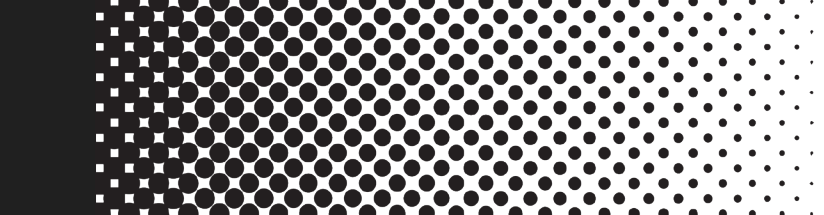
¹After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.

²When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

⁷On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered.

⁹And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up





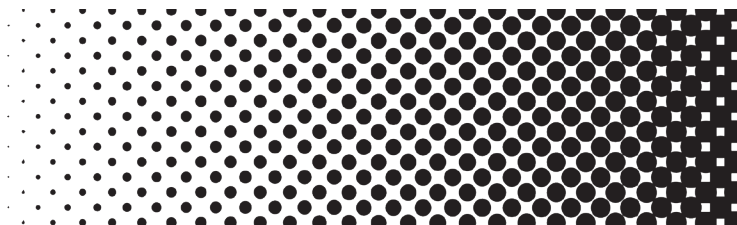
dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” ¹¹And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹²And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

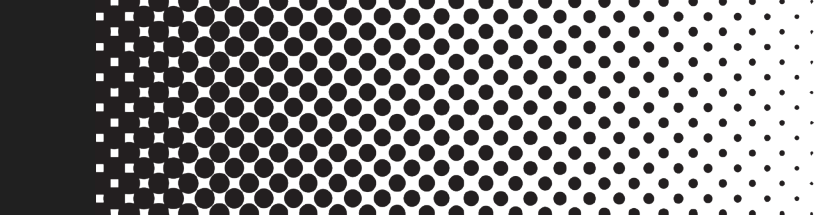
¹³But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land. ¹⁴And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene. ¹⁵And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus. ¹⁶For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

SESSION 7

¹⁷Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers,





to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

³⁶And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

INTRODUCTION

Paul has plans for making his way back to Jerusalem. His partners on the mission have changed and their numbers have increased.

But as he makes his way back we hear goodbyes and we start to understand that he expects the remainder of his ministry will be incredibly rough but fruitful.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In Acts 20:4, what do the people mentioned have in common? What does it reveal about the mission to the Gentiles? How does it speak to what a church community is supposed to look like?
2. What do you think Paul means when he says “constrained by the Spirit” in Acts 20:22? How does it apply to his decisions and what is ahead of him? Do you think he means the Spirit is controlling him like a puppet master pulling strings or something different? Explain.
3. Paul is making bold statements in Acts 20:20-21, 27, 31-32. What is Paul saying he did and what is he saying they should do?
4. What is Paul expecting from his trip to Jerusalem and what is he using as his proof? How does the idea of obedience fit into Paul’s understanding of faith?
5. Read Philippians 3:7-16. How does Paul’s letter to the Philippian church compare with his words to the Ephesian elders here in Acts 20? How do these ideas of not thinking selfishly and finishing well fit into your faith?

6. Paul uses the two imperatives “attention” and “alert” to warn the overseers of the Ephesian church. What are the problems that Paul is warning them about between these imperatives? Where will the problems come from?
7. Describe a time you witnessed one of these problems take place in a church (be careful not to use names or slander individuals). What did you do?
8. What are the implications of Acts 20:33-35 on work whether inside or outside the church?
9. Not once does Paul use the word “love” in his speech to the Ephesian elders. Looking through the speech, can you identify how Paul showed his love to the Ephesian church? Explain.
10. If you knew this was your last conversation with people you loved, invested in and spent time with, what would you say? What would you hope your relationship had at its center?

TENDING THE FIRE

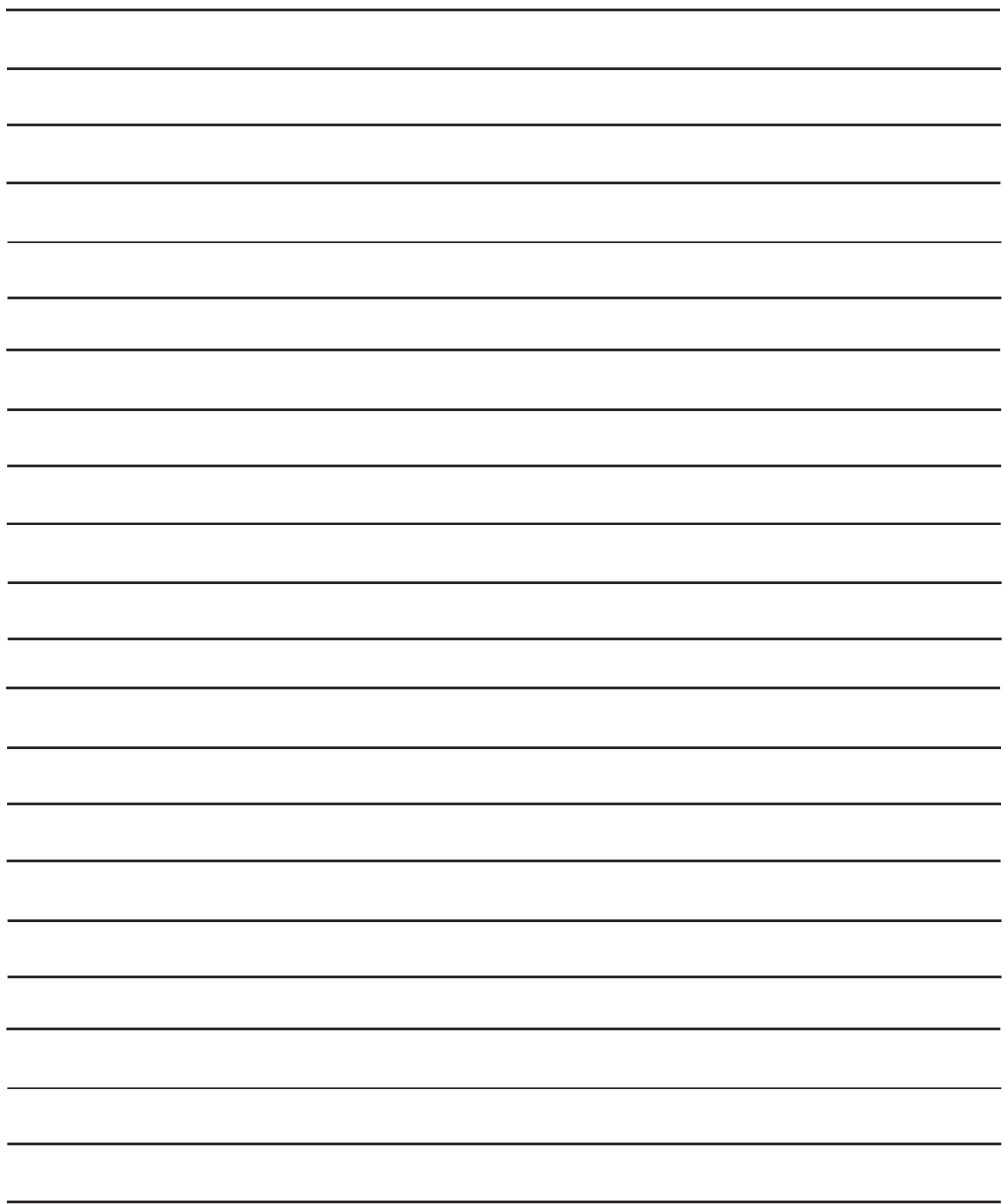


Every tribe, tongue, and nation. Whether in Troas or Miletus, Luke reveals how much Paul cares for the churches at the “ends of the earth” and it shows by simply looking at those that follow him. He seems to never stop teaching, reminding, admonishing, and encouraging them. His concern for their salvation and well-being can be seen in both the care of Eutychus, and his twice noted “tears” for Ephesus (the only two references to tears in the Book of Acts). The image painted in this session is bittersweet. Paul knows he is heading into a storm and he knows that those he has poured into will never see him again. Not only that, but he knows a different kind of storm will swirl around them as well. So he warns them to pay attention to both external threats and those among them that “twist” ideas to cause division.

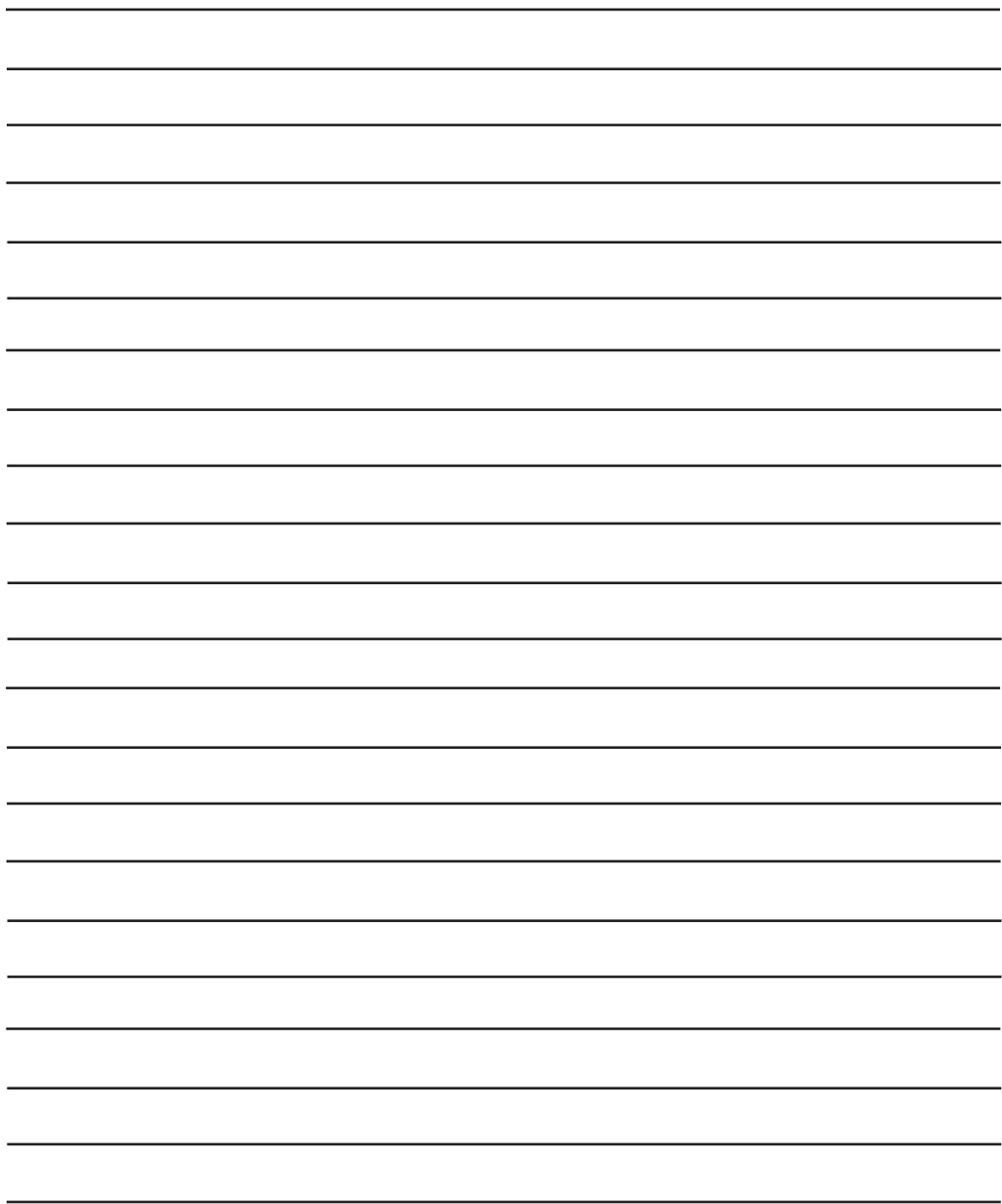
So what can possibly fuel this love, obedience, and determination? Paul’s words and attitude remind his audience of Another who set His face toward Jerusalem knowing a path of suffering and affliction were certain. It is this King that has changed Paul. It is this King that Paul proclaims. This King drives Paul’s love for the church.

How loving are you to your church family? How much determination and obedience will you expend on their behalf? What are some ways you can build up your local church? This is a good week to start.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





SVCCchurch.com