



PAUL'S LIFE AND MINISTRY

Date: 08.17.25 | Paul's Third Missionary Journey
Scripture: Acts 19:1-41; 20:17-38

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- God values all people and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost with the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and people are invited to join Him in His work.
- We are to be involved in reaching the nations through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- The church is a fellowship of believers, and we are called to meet together regularly.
- The church is not a place or a building, but rather a community of people who belong to the family of God.

HIGH SCHOOL:

- God values all people---born and unborn, young and old, male and female, all ethnicities, those of opposing faiths---and calls Christians to live on mission for the sake of reaching the lost through prayer, giving resources, acting with love, and sharing the gospel.
- God continues to work in the world, and as we join Him in His work, He uses people to accomplish His eternal purposes.
- We demonstrate honor for God when we respect the earthly authorities God has placed in our lives.
- The church is a community of believers called to gather regularly to study Scripture, pray, worship, serve, encourage one another, and proclaim the gospel to the world.
- The church is called to train and equip its members for works of ministry.



MEMORY VERSE

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. - Romans 1:16a

16 F l a n a o t g, f i i t p o G f s t e w b, - use this first letter memorization tool that aids in remembering text by using the first letter of each word as a cue.



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INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

“Chain Reaction”

Setup & Instructions:

1. Tell students: “Today, we’re going to see how one person’s actions can cause a chain reaction—kind of like what happened when Paul preached in Ephesus.”
2. Have the group stand in a circle.
3. Start with one student who makes a simple motion (clap, stomp, snap, wave, etc.).
4. The next person immediately copies it and adds their own motion.
5. Keep going around the circle, each person adding to the sequence until it becomes a long chain of actions.
6. If someone messes up, the “reaction” breaks and you start over.

Debrief:

- Ask: “What happened when one person made a choice?” (It affected everyone else.)
- Transition: Explain that in Acts 19–20, Paul’s ministry started a spiritual chain reaction—people came to faith, idols lost business, and a riot even broke out. His example also deeply impacted the church leaders in Ephesus.



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BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Paul's third missionary journey, recorded in [Acts 18:23–21:17](#) and taking place around AD 52–57, built on the foundation of his earlier travels. After spending some time in Antioch, he set out again, traveling through Galatia and Phrygia to strengthen the disciples, visiting churches he had planted years earlier ([Acts 18:23; Galatians 4:19](#)). From the start, Paul's ministry was twofold—proclaiming Christ to unbelievers and strengthening the faith of believers ([Colossians 1:28–29](#))—always with an eye toward the Spirit's leading ([Romans 8:14; Proverbs 16:9](#)).

On the way, he had left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus after a brief initial visit there. Ephesus, a major port city in Asia Minor, was famous for its massive temple to Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. In Paul's absence, Priscilla and Aquila met Apollos, a gifted Alexandrian preacher who knew the Scriptures well and taught accurately about Jesus but knew only the baptism of John. They took him aside privately, explained “the way of God more accurately” ([Acts 18:26](#)), and he went on to become an influential teacher in Corinth ([1 Corinthians 3:5–6](#)).

When Paul finally returned to Ephesus, he met about twelve men who had received John's baptism of repentance but had not yet heard of Jesus' death, resurrection, or the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ([Luke 3:16; Acts 2:1–4](#)). Like faithful Old Testament believers, they were still awaiting the promised Messiah ([Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1](#)). Paul explained the gospel of Jesus to them ([1 Corinthians 15:3–4](#)), baptized them in His name ([Matthew 28:19](#)), and laid hands on them. They received the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and prophesying ([1 Corinthians 12:7–11](#)), showing that they had entered the New Covenant ([Ezekiel 36:26–27; Joel 2:28–29](#)).

Paul first preached boldly in the synagogue for three months, reasoning and persuading about the kingdom of God ([Mark 1:15](#)). When some hardened themselves and began speaking evil of “the Way,” he withdrew and began teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, and Luke notes that “all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord” ([Acts 19:10](#)), meaning the gospel spread far beyond Ephesus, likely leading to the planting of churches in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis ([Colossians 4:13, 15–16](#)).

God confirmed Paul's message with extraordinary miracles ([Hebrews 2:3–4](#)), even to the point that handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were carried to the sick, resulting



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in healing and deliverance from evil spirits (*Mark 16:17–18*). A dramatic episode occurred when seven sons of Sceva, Jewish exorcists, attempted to use the name of “Jesus whom Paul proclaims” over a demon-possessed man. The evil spirit responded, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” and the man overpowered them, leaving them wounded and naked (*Matthew 7:21–23*). This incident spread fear and reverence for the name of Jesus throughout Ephesus (*Philippians 2:9–11*). Many believers confessed their past sins (*James 5:16*), and those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them publicly (*Deuteronomy 18:10–12*). The value of the scrolls was estimated at fifty thousand silver coins—a massive sum—showing the depth of their repentance and the costly nature of following Christ (*Luke 14:33; Philippians 3:7–8*).

The growing influence of the gospel soon threatened the local idol-making industry. Demetrius, a silversmith who crafted miniature shrines of Artemis, gathered other craftsmen and warned that their business and the honor of the goddess were in danger if people continued turning to Christ. His words stirred up a riot (*2 Timothy 3:12*). The crowd filled the great theater of Ephesus, shouting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” for about two hours. Paul wanted to address the mob, but the disciples and even friendly city officials urged him not to risk his life (*Proverbs 27:12*). The city clerk eventually quieted the crowd, pointing out that Paul had neither blasphemed the goddess nor robbed temples, and urged any legal grievances to be handled in court (*Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–15*). This episode showed both the cultural tension the gospel can cause (*Matthew 10:34–36*) and the truth that Christianity was not an illegal or disorderly movement under Roman law.

After these events, Paul traveled through Macedonia and Greece, encouraging the believers (*1 Thessalonians 5:11*). On his return trip, he stopped at Miletus and sent for the elders of the Ephesian church. His farewell address to them in *Acts 20:18–35* is the only speech in Acts given exclusively to Christians and reveals his heart for the church. He reminded them of his example: serving the Lord with humility (*Philippians 2:3–4*), tears, and endurance despite trials from Jewish opposition, and holding nothing back that would benefit them—teaching publicly and from house to house, testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (*Mark 1:15; 2 Timothy 2:25*). He told them the Spirit compelled him to go to Jerusalem, not knowing the details of what would happen there except that imprisonment and afflictions awaited him (*Philippians 1:20–21*), yet he declared that his life was worth nothing to him if only he could finish his race and complete the ministry received from the Lord Jesus—to testify to the gospel of the grace of God (*2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1–2*).



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Paul warned that after his departure, “fierce wolves” would come in among them, not sparing the flock ([Matthew 7:15](#)), and even from among their number some would distort the truth to draw away disciples after them ([2 Peter 2:1-3](#); [Jude 3-4](#)). Therefore, they must be watchful (1 Peter 5:8) and remember his three years of admonishing each one with tears. He commended them to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build them up and give them an inheritance among the sanctified ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#); [1 Peter 1:3-4](#)). Paul reminded them that he had not coveted anyone’s silver, gold, or clothing ([Exodus 20:17](#); [Hebrews 13:5](#)), but had worked with his own hands to provide for himself and his companions, modeling generosity ([2 Thessalonians 3:7-9](#)) and quoting Jesus’ words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” ([Proverbs 11:25](#)). After speaking, he knelt and prayed with them all ([Philippians 4:6](#)). They wept freely, embraced him, and kissed him, grieving most that they would never see his face again, and then accompanied him to the ship ([1 Thessalonians 2:17-20](#)).

Paul’s ministry in Ephesus and his charge to the elders reveal several enduring truths: the gospel transforms lives deeply, leading believers to renounce sin at great personal cost ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)); spiritual power and authority cannot be borrowed or faked but come only through union with Christ ([John 15:4-5](#)); and faithful church leadership demands humility, vigilance, sacrificial service, and deep dependence on the Word of God ([Joshua 1:8](#); [Psalm 119:105](#)). Paul’s life models a commitment to finishing the gospel mission no matter the cost ([Luke 9:23-24](#)), trusting God’s grace to sustain both himself and the churches he loved ([2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#)).



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LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY

Remind your group that we are studying the New Testament. Throughout the book of Acts, Paul traveled on missionary journeys, sharing the Gospel and helping to gather groups of new believers into the first churches.



TELL THE STORY - Acts 18:18-23; 20:1-16

Paul went on his third missionary journey to tell more people about Jesus and help churches grow stronger. On his way, he stopped in a big city called Ephesus. This city was famous for a massive temple to the goddess Artemis. When Paul first visited, he didn't stay long, but he promised the people, "If God wants me to, I will come back."

Later, Paul did come back to Ephesus. There, he met twelve men who had been baptized by John the Baptist. They had heard about turning from sin, but they didn't know about Jesus dying on the cross, coming back to life, or sending the Holy Spirit. Paul told them the good news about Jesus. They believed, were baptized in Jesus' name, and the Holy Spirit came on them.

Paul started teaching about Jesus in the synagogue for three months. Some people believed, but others became stubborn and wouldn't listen. So Paul moved to another place—the lecture hall of Tyrannus—and taught there every day for more than two years. Because of this, many people in Asia heard about Jesus, and new churches started in other cities.

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. Even cloths he had touched were used to heal the sick! Some men tried to use Jesus' name to cast out evil spirits, but they didn't believe in Him, so it didn't work. When people in Ephesus saw this, many who practiced magic burned their scrolls, showing they were giving their whole lives to Jesus.

But not everyone was happy. A man named Demetrius made silver statues of Artemis, and he was afraid he'd lose money if people stopped worshiping idols. He started a huge riot, and the whole city gathered in the theater, shouting for hours. Finally, the city leader calmed everyone down and said Paul had not done anything wrong.

Later, Paul met with the church leaders from Ephesus in a town called Miletus. He told them he had served with humility, taught them everything they needed to know about Jesus,

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and warned them to watch out for false teachers. He said he was going to Jerusalem, even though the Holy Spirit had told him that trouble was waiting for him there. Paul said his life didn't matter as much as finishing the job Jesus gave him—to tell the good news. They all prayed together and cried because they knew they wouldn't see him again.

Paul's time in Ephesus shows us that Jesus changes hearts, that we should be brave even when it's hard, and that leaders should take care of God's people by teaching them the truth from the Bible.



RETELL THE STORY



SHARE THE GOSPEL

As Paul traveled on his third missionary journey, he used every opportunity to tell people the good news about Jesus and to help the church. Paul was dedicated to Jesus, who called him to do the work of sharing the gospel. As Paul shared the gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit opened people's hearts to believe in Jesus. People were saved from their sins, and God was glorified through Paul.



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QUESTIONS TO REBUILD THE STORY

How did Paul determine where to go in his work of sharing the gospel? (*Acts 19:21 and Acts 20:22*). Paul went wherever the Holy Spirit led him to go. Paul trusted God and was obedient to the Spirit who helped him share the good news. The same Spirit that was in Paul is also in those who trust in Jesus. He also helps us live on mission.

Paul spent time in Ephesus, encouraging the believers there and preaching against idolatry.

What did Paul say about the idols being made in the city of Ephesus? (*Acts 19:26*) Paul boldly proclaimed that the idols or gods being made were not gods at all. Paul wanted all people to know and believe in the one true God and His Son, Jesus.

Paul informed the Ephesian Christians that he was traveling to Jerusalem, despite recognizing that he would face suffering there. **What did Paul say was his goal in life?** (*Acts 20:24*) Paul's greatest desire was to finish the work God had called him to. Even if he would suffer or die, Paul wanted to continue to follow the Spirit and tell others about Jesus.

Why was Paul willing to spend his life telling others about Jesus? Paul knew the power of the gospel and how it saves and changes people. Remember Paul's life before he knew Jesus, and then after. Paul desired to testify to the grace of God. Paul wanted to glorify Jesus above all else.

Paul was willing to risk his life for the sake of the gospel because Jesus was most important to him. Is Jesus most important to you? Why? To know Christ and to make Christ known is the call of every believer. We can show our love for Jesus by obeying His commands.



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Paul not only shared the gospel but also encouraged Christians in their faith. Who encourages you? Who do you encourage? Believers encourage one another to continue following the example of Christ and to remind each other of the hope we have in Jesus.

What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?

What does the story teach me about myself?

Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?

Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?

How does this story help me live on mission?



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PRAYER PROMPTS

God, help us to use every opportunity to share the gospel. Give us the courage to share Your love with others so they might believe and be saved. Amen.

IF TIME ALLOWS:

Practice naming the 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Remind the kids that these books are in the NT and tell of Jesus' time on earth. Practice finding these books in the Bible.

Practice naming some of the disciples. During Wednesday night Bible study childcare, the kids learned a hokey song to remember all of the disciples. Play it a couple of times with your group and have them try to sing along.

You can find the song [here](#).

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For July and August, our Creek Kids will be collecting money in the funnel for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. We will have a family mission opportunity in August, where our families can both register and attend a bed build with Sleep in Heavenly Peace. Additionally, they can shop and purchase needed items from a wishlist for this organization. More information about this special project will come soon.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Continue to use the Memory Verse Handout for fun ideas for practicing the memory verse for this unit.

[Check out this Seeds Kids song](#), Not Ashamed: Romans 1:16-17 to help memorize this verse.



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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - God is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.



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ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.



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Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



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Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD



- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD



- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?