

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT[®]

All Things New

Leader Guide

SUMMER 2021 | VOL. 12 | CSB



God's Word to You



The Good News That Awaits Us

“And they all lived happily ever after.”

This is the coda, the postscript that punctuates the tales of our childhoods. The prince is victorious. The dragon is defeated. The princess is rescued. The struggle is over. The battle is won. And finally, “they all lived happily ever after.”

The Bible has its coda as well. But unlike the happily-ever-afters of fairy tales, this is one of expectation—not for the end to come but for the next chapter to be written. A promise summarized in three words: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20). This is the promise the entire story of Scripture builds toward. It is the deepest longing of the heart of God’s people. The first man and woman longed for the coming of the Son, the One whose heel would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). Abraham longed for the promised Offspring through whom all nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:3,7). David longed to see his Lord, the Son who would sit on the throne of an unfading kingdom (Ps. 110:1). God’s people in exile and return longed for the coming of the Servant who would restore them (Isa. 49:6-7).

Then the long-expected One came—Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Son of Eve, the Son of God—bringing redemption and peace with God by humbling Himself to the point of death and then being exalted in His resurrection (Phil. 2:8-11).

News of the reconciliation Jesus offered spread throughout the world. People of every tribe and tongue and nation believed and trusted Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. And as this good news continued to spread, the promise spread with it—the promise that tells of the day when Jesus returns to make all things new. When every tear will be wiped from every eye. When suffering, sadness, and death will be no more. In their place will be joy, gladness, and life everlasting as God dwells with His people forevermore.

But for now, we wait. And as we do, we join with our brothers and sisters across the centuries as we long for that day to come, echoing these words: “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”



Suggested for
the week of

Unit 34: Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)

June 6	6	<i>Session 1</i>	Persevering in the Mission
June 13	18	<i>Session 2</i>	Continuing Through Opposition
June 20	30	<i>Session 3</i>	Breaking Down Barriers
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August 22	138	<i>Session 3</i>	The Redeemer Is Worshiped
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Cover Art Explanation

This cover art is a compilation of images of Jesus in the Book of Revelation. In his vision, John saw the glorified Jesus standing among the seven golden lampstands, representing seven churches, and He had seven stars in His right hand, representing the angels or messengers of those churches. He wore a golden sash, His feet were like bronze, His eyes were like a fiery flame, a two-edged sword came from His mouth, and His face shone like the sun (Unit 36, Session 1). The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Unit 36, Session 4).

The Gospel Project®
Adult Leader Guide CSB
Volume 9, Number 4 Summer 2021

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Printed in the United States of America

The Gospel Project®, *Adult Leader Guide* CSB
(ISSN 2163-0917; Item 005438061) is published
quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources, One
LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234, Ben Mandrell,
President. © 2021 LifeWay Christian Resources.

For ordering or inquiries, visit lifeway.com, or
write LifeWay Resources Customer Service, One
LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113. For bulk
shipments mailed quarterly to one address, email
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Trevin Wax

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*

AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING

Rethink Your Self: The Power of Looking Up Before Looking In

Our chronological journey through the Bible is now coming to a close. As we arrive at the end of the New Testament, we come full circle to the truths that opened the story of the Bible at the very beginning—God's people in God's world under God's gracious rule. But this time, the end turns out to be even better than the beginning. God's people know His grace and mercy in ways that, apart from redemption through Christ, they never would have experienced. Redemption and full restoration—this is the great hope of the Christian.

In this volume, you will see the endurance and perseverance of the apostle Paul, whose courage and grace was evident in his life and in his letters. You'll also hear from other apostles whose writings inspired the early church and informed them of key Christian truths that must be defended and passed down to each generation. In the end, you'll encounter the stunning portrait of Jesus we find in Revelation, a book that lifts high the name of Jesus and points us to the glorious future that awaits.

Resurrection hope is not passive. It's active in its waiting. It's moving forward on mission with our King, knowing that our labor is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Our prayer is that this volume of *The Gospel Project* will help you along in your journey of trusting Jesus, hoping for His return, and loving God and neighbor as He commands. Along with John, the author of Revelation, we say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

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Persevering in the Mission

Summary and Goal

The gospel message serves as a bridge to connect a person's story to God's story found in Scripture. Since Jesus is the main character in God's story, we must be diligent to make Him known in ways people can understand. When we embrace Jesus as Savior, we are given a new identity in Him. In this session, we will observe how the apostle Paul made Jesus known in different ways when he proclaimed the gospel with clarity. Like Paul, we should be ready to share Jesus with as many people and through as many ways as possible. God moves on the hearts of hearers of the gospel when Jesus is made known to them.

Session Outline

1. Preach the message of the gospel with clarity (Acts 19:1-7).
2. Persevere in the work of the gospel (Acts 19:8-10).
3. Pursue transformation through the power of the gospel (Acts 19:18-20).

Background Passage: Acts 18:23–21:14

Session in a Sentence

God calls His people to fulfill their mission of faithfully preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ Connection

When Paul arrived in Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he encountered people with various understandings of salvation. Paul faithfully shared the gospel with all he met and persevered in his efforts, resulting in many trusting in Jesus and experiencing changed lives. Paul's faithful perseverance was a testimony to Jesus, who faithfully endured to bring salvation to the world.

Missional Application

Because Christ endured rejection, suffering, and death to bring about our salvation, we persevere in sharing the gospel with others while hoping that they too will trust in Jesus and experience transformation.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in this shaded area throughout the session.

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraphs on page 11 in the Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG) to recount the writer's experience of crossing paths with a young man and sharing the gospel with him.

"I just want to know God accepts me even though He knows all the wrong I've done in my life." A young man shared this with me as we were having a conversation. God had led our paths to intersect, and I had the joy of sharing with him what Jesus had done to make sinners both accepted and eternally welcomed in God's family, in short, the gospel.

Then I asked him if he wanted to make a profession of faith: confessing his sinfulness, his inability to pay off his sin debt, and his faith that the work Jesus did in His crucifixion and resurrection was all that God required for him to never face God's wrath. I informed him that the moment we trust in Jesus, not only does God declare us eternally "not guilty" for our sins but we receive credit for Jesus' perfect life, His righteousness covering us throughout eternity. From the moment he embraced Jesus, God the Father accepted him, has forgiven him, and eternally adopted him into His family.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



How has God planned your steps so that you have had opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

SUMMARIZE: The gospel message serves as a bridge to connect a person's story to God's story found in Scripture. Since Jesus is the main character in God's story, we must be diligent to make Him known in ways people can understand. When we embrace Jesus as Savior, we are given a new identity in Him. In this session, we will observe how the apostle Paul made Jesus known in different ways when he proclaimed the gospel with clarity. Like Paul, we should be ready to share Jesus with as many people and through as many ways as possible. God moves on the hearts of hearers of the gospel when Jesus is made known to them.

Leaders, grow on the go! Listen to session-by-session training every week on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or LifeWay's Digital Pass: ministrygrid.com/gospelproject | gospelproject.com/podcasts.

Point 1: Preach the message of the gospel with clarity (Acts 19:1-7).

READ Acts 19:1-7 (DDG p. 12).

¹ While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples ² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” “No,” they told him, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

³ “Into what then were you baptized?” he asked them. “Into John’s baptism,” they replied.

⁴ Paul said, “John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus.”

⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak in tongues and to prophesy. ⁷ Now there were about twelve men in all.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 12) to provide the context for John the Baptist being referenced in the Gentile city of Ephesus and how Paul helped these disciples understand the gospel of Jesus.

John the Baptist had a localized ministry in the wilderness south of Jerusalem around the Jordan River. So it’s amazing to see the reach of his message outside of Israel and Palestine as far away as the Gentile city of Ephesus. These disciples of John the Baptist had encountered his baptism of repentance, but they were not yet followers of Jesus. They needed someone to fill in the gaps regarding John’s ministry and how it pointed to Jesus being the Messiah for whom John was the forerunner. The Lord led Paul into their path with this good news.

- John the Baptist preached about the Messiah’s coming and prepared people for the Holy Spirit’s baptism that would come from the Messiah (Matt. 3:11). So Paul asked these disciples of John the Baptist if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed, presumably meaning believed in Jesus, the Messiah. The response from these followers of John the Baptist—saying they had not heard about the Holy Spirit—could mean they had not heard these details from John before they were parted. Or it could mean they were unaware of the fulfillment of John’s ministry, that the Messiah and the Holy Spirit had indeed come and now the Spirit indwells the life of every Jesus follower following Pentecost (see Acts 2). Regardless of their understanding, Paul clarified for these men that John’s baptism was to prepare hearts for the coming of the Messiah Jesus, whom John pointed to.
- Paul’s concern as an apostle of Jesus Christ was not limited to someone professing to be a believer in God or simply expressing a heart for repentance. He knew that because Jesus, the promised Messiah, had come, salvation is found through faith in Jesus’ name and in no other (Acts 4:12). As Paul said in Romans 10:9-17, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the message that must be preached in order for people to repent and believe and be saved.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What are some things people may base their hope of salvation on other than the gospel of Jesus? (water baptism; walking an aisle and saying a prayer; their good works; their family name; their reputation in the eyes of others; comparing themselves to other “sinners”)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 12) to show how the disciples of John responded to Paul’s gospel presentation and became disciples of Jesus.

Having heard the gospel clearly and now with knowledge of and faith in Jesus, these disciples of John were baptized into Jesus’ name, exactly as John the Baptist would have wanted. But Paul didn’t stop there. He then laid hands on these new believers and the Holy Spirit came upon them, just as Jesus promised. Through faith in Jesus, every believer receives the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit, who is God’s guarantee that we will be with God forever (2 Cor. 1:20-22; 5:1-5; Eph. 1:13-14).

- Throughout the Book of Acts, speaking in tongues—best understood as known languages being spoken intelligently by a believer to whom those languages were previously unknown—was a sign that salvation had taken place (see Acts 2:1-11). In Acts 8:14-17, we see Samaritans embrace the truth of the gospel, and when hands were laid on them, they too received the Holy Spirit. And in Acts 10:44-46, Gentiles received the Holy Spirit through hearing the truth of the gospel.
 - God the Holy Spirit does not follow a formula that can be replicated. Rather, He moves as He desires, leaving evidence that He’s working (John 3:3-8). In Acts, the Spirit may come through words or through laying on of hands. He might come upon someone before water baptism or after. But one thing is certain: the focus on all of these narratives is that the gospel was preached with clarity and precision before sinners from various ethnicities embraced Jesus as their Savior and subsequently received the Holy Spirit. The focus of our ministry also must be clear gospel proclamation.
-

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 12).

Personality of the Holy Spirit: The Bible not only affirms the full **divinity** of the Holy Spirit but also His **personhood**.

Essential Doctrine “Personality of the Holy Spirit”: The Bible not only affirms the full **divinity** of the Holy Spirit but also His **personhood**. Many people have mistakenly believed that the Spirit is a force or power, not a person. However, Scripture affirms His personhood by acknowledging that He is treated as a person (Acts 5:3; 7:51; Heb. 10:29), acts like a person (John 14:26; 15:26; Rom. 8:14), has attributes of a person (1 Cor. 2:10-11; Eph. 4:30), and acts in personal ways (Isa. 63:10; Acts 13:2). In addition to these, the Bible also affirms that Christians relate to Him personally (Acts 5:3-4; 7:51).

Point 2: Persevere in the work of the gospel (Acts 19:8-10).

READ Acts 19:8-10 (DDG p. 13).

⁸ Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly over a period of three months, arguing and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became hardened and would not believe, slandering the Way in front of the crowd, he withdrew from them, taking the disciples, and conducted discussions every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 13) to highlight the ways Paul persevered in his gospel ministry, chiefly in spite of rejection.

Paul's gospel ministry in Ephesus demonstrated perseverance on a number of levels. One, this was Paul's second time to visit Ephesus (Acts 18:19). He made a stop in this city as his second missionary journey was winding down and promised to come back, if the Lord willed it so (18:21). Two, on his third missionary journey, Paul did return and remained in Ephesus over two years preaching and teaching the gospel and making disciples of Jesus (20:31). Three, even though Paul experienced opposition, he continued to share the gospel, beginning with the Jews and then reaching out to the Gentiles.

- It was Paul's practice to go first to his fellow Jews with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16-17). As he did on his first visit to Ephesus, Paul immediately went to the Jewish synagogue to begin his ministry (Acts 18:19). He did this with a desire to see those of his own ethnicity come to know Jesus as the promised Messiah (Rom. 10:1-4). This made practical sense because the Jews had knowledge of the promises of God and the Word of God that we know as the Old Testament. Functionally, however, this was difficult work as Paul had to debate, argue, and persuade the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfillment of their Scriptures.
- After some Jews rejected the gospel outright and began to disparage Paul's message, Paul began the second stage of his gospel ministry in a new city—he withdrew from the Jews, taking the believers with him, and began to focus on preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. He knew it was God's design for the nations to hear about the life and work of Jesus Christ so they too could repent of their sins and embrace Jesus as Savior by faith.

Application: For Jesus followers today, it is good for us to practice the same non-discrimination policy that Paul practiced. We should be ready to share the gospel with everyone, no matter their ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, or social class. We must be dedicated to making disciples of those who respond to the gospel and embrace Jesus. Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20 is for His followers to make disciples of all ethnicities.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What are some ways believers can demonstrate perseverance in the work of the gospel? (remaining connected to and active in a church grounded in the gospel; sharing the gospel in spite of rejection and opposition; striving for holiness in their own lives so as to honor their Savior; consistently showing love to others, whether they be friends or foes; continuing to apply the gospel to their own lives through ongoing repentance and faith)

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 13) to emphasize yet another way Paul persevered—with the content of his gospel ministry.

Another aspect of perseverance is being faithful to the message and implications of the gospel. Paul used Ephesus as a home base for reaching out to all the inhabitants of the region of Asia (modern-day Turkey), and all heard “the word of the Lord”—the gospel of Jesus. Furthermore, Paul committed himself to teaching and training the disciples under his care. He did this in person and he did it through his letters. His Letter to the Ephesians, for example, gives us insight into how the gospel shapes those who persevere in it.

Voices from the Church

“If we want to know how we can see cities changed and wonder how the affections of idolaters can be changed, we need to preach the Word of Christ. Doing so is key ... Just keep explaining and applying it—in small groups, in large groups, one-on-one, in lecture halls, in homes, under a tree in Ethiopia, or anywhere else. For hearing it really does ‘renew one’s life’ (Ps. 19:7).”¹

—Tony Merida

- The work of the gospel, also known as the mission of making disciples, is difficult. Otherwise, we wouldn’t need to persevere. But in faithfulness to our Savior and with love for others, we do persevere so we may help others know Christ and become more like Him. For example, in Ephesians 4:25-32, Paul counseled his readers to persevere in the following areas of personal discipleship: correcting our speech (Eph. 4:25,29), calling out our selfishness (Eph. 4:26-28), and combating our sinfulness (Eph. 4:30-32). Persevering in this work of applying the gospel to our own lives will better equip us to serve our local churches, our communities, and our world with the gospel.
-

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 What are some specific examples you have witnessed of believers persevering in the work of the gospel? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

Point 3: Pursue transformation through the power of the gospel (Acts 19:18-20).

SAY: The power of God bore witness to the power and truth of the gospel during Paul’s ministry in Ephesus. People were healed and evil spirits were cast out (Acts 19:11-12). Also, a demon verbally—and physically—acknowledged the power of Jesus and His messenger, Paul, and everyone began to respect the name of Jesus (19:13-17). But the power of the gospel can also be seen in its ability to change people so that they reject their former way of life and culture and align themselves with Christ, no matter the cost.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Acts 19:18-20 (DDG p. 14).

¹⁸ And many who had become believers came confessing and disclosing their practices, ¹⁹ while many of those who had practiced magic collected their books and burned them in front of everyone. So they calculated their value and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread and prevailed.

PACK ITEM 2: HOLINESS: Use the **Jen Wilkin quote** on this poster and the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 14) to show how the power of the gospel changes lives through our salvation by faith, whereby we receive a new identity.

The Ephesians who embraced Jesus made life-altering decisions, beginning with confessing their sins to one another. For some, this included the practice of magic, a normal part of life in Ephesus and big business. Yet people were choosing to leave that life behind and follow Jesus in obedience. When we embrace Jesus by faith, we receive a new identity—no longer are we slaves to the sin that once defined us; now we are saints with a new master, Jesus, who loves us.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 14) to show how the power of the gospel changes lives through our *sanctification*, whereby the Holy Spirit renovates believers from the inside out.

Through the power of God on display in miracles and especially through the powerful “word of the Lord,” people in Ephesus acknowledged Jesus’ authority to rule over their lives, and this included His authority to make renovations in their hearts. From the moment one believes in Jesus for salvation, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, begins a progressive process of renovating us from the inside out. We call this work *sanctification*. And just as the Word of God brings us to the place of salvation by faith, it is the primary tool of God for shaping our hearts according to His (Heb. 4:12).

- *Sanctification* is a work of God in the heart, but it is also something we must pursue through our obedience to God. The power of the gospel revealed to us in our salvation is what empowers our efforts to put away our sin and put on our new self in Christ (Eph. 4:20-24).

-
- The Ephesian believers who confessed their practice of magic demonstrated the change in their hearts first through their confession, but they continued through the tangible act of burning their books that informed these sinful practices. It is clear from the monetary value of the books that they could have sold the books for their personal gain, but they took a massive loss instead. Such was the miraculous work of God in their hearts and their desire to obey their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ. And naturally, the “word of the Lord” continued to spread and have its effect on people throughout the region.

Illustration: The work of sanctification can be illustrated with the difference between making renovations in a home someone owns versus in a hotel room. A stay in a hotel involves a contract that prohibits you from making any permanent changes to the room. Replace the shower with a bath tub or redo the carpet and you would be liable to pay for all of the damages and changes because you are not the owner of the hotel room. In your own home, however, you have every right to make renovations. You do not need outside permission (though you may need a permit) to put in a swimming pool, add another bedroom, or redecorate the kitchen. Signing your name on the deed gave you full ownership of the home.

When we heard and believed the gospel, we became part of Jesus’ kingdom, one of His people, a treasured possession (1 Pet. 2:9). As such, Jesus has the right to make any transformations in us that He desires. The challenge we often face is that we sinfully choose to work against what Jesus has planned for us. We treat Jesus like a hotel tenant on a short-term stay rather than the owner of the house. Jesus wants to transform our lives for the better, and we must learn to submit to and cooperate with His renovations.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 14).

New Identity of the Believer: When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental **change** of identity. Anyone who is in Christ is a “new creation” in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and **progressing**, becoming more and more like **Christ**.

Essential Doctrine “New Identity of the Believer”: When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental **change** of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God’s wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to being welcomed into God’s family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ’s perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a “new creation” in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and **progressing**, becoming more and more like **Christ** (2 Cor. 5:17).

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some ways believers can pursue transformation in their lives? (confession of sin one to another; submission to the Word of God preached and taught in worship and Bible study; reading, studying, memorizing, and obeying the Scriptures; faithfully sharing the gospel with others)

My Mission

EXPLAIN: When Paul arrived in Ephesus, he faithfully shared the gospel with the people he met. He continued to press on and persevere in his ministry efforts, all the while trusting Jesus, who was changing lives throughout Ephesus. All Paul did was imitate Jesus, who faithfully endured in order to bring salvation to the world. Jesus endured rejection, suffering, and ultimately death on our behalf in order to save us. This truth supplies us with the strength we will need to persevere ourselves in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with others, hoping they will trust in Jesus and experience the holistic life transformation He gives.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 15), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God's Word.

Because Christ endured rejection, suffering, and death to bring about our salvation, we persevere in sharing the gospel with others while hoping that they too will trust in Jesus and experience transformation.

- **How will you pursue transformation through the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ?**
- **What are some ways your group needs to pray for and encourage one another, specifically for the purpose of perseverance in sharing the gospel?**
- **With whom will you share the good news that Jesus is the Savior we all need to be saved from our sins?**

Voices from the Church

“Presenting the gospel in new and pioneering ways is in keeping with the New Testament model; concealing the gospel to keep from offending our hearers is not. Taking the pragmatic approach to doing ministry is human-centered and reveals a lack of confidence in the sufficiency of preaching the Word of God.”²

—James T. Draper Jr.
and Kenneth Keathley

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, we praise You and thank You for our salvation made possible through the perseverance of Your Son, Jesus, who endured both life and death to rescue us from our sin. And we are grateful for the persevering work of the Holy Spirit to free us from sin's grip. Now may we persevere in our lives even unto death for the sake of Jesus' glory and the fulfillment of the gospel mission. Strengthen us to endure all hardships and give us hearts to see the lost come to Christ in faith. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 16-18), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 19) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God's Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 16-18) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 19) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 16-18) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 2** as a part of point 1 in the session: **We must remain sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading when we speak with people who may have a view of God that is devoid of true knowledge of Jesus.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 1:** "The practice of continued oversight and accountability with fellow believers in our churches is not a formality or extracurricular activity."
- **Day 3:** "Our spiritual armor is not assembled by paying lip service to the name of Jesus; we put it on daily through a real faith relationship with our Savior."



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 19) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to describe the first time they each recall hearing the gospel clearly presented and how it affected them from that point onward.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: Preach the message of the gospel with clarity (Acts 19:1-7).

“A reader coming to the book of Acts from the reading of the Gospel of Luke, as Theophilus (1:1) would have done (Luke 1:3), would find many profound elements of continuity between the two narratives (1:2-3; 6:8; 7:59-60); but one element of continuity for which the Gospel would not have prepared him was the prominent place still being occupied by Saint John the Baptist, the ‘Forerunner,’ here in the narrative of Acts . . . That report may perhaps be seen as a presage and an explanation of the apparently widespread survival of what almost seems to have been a continuing cult of John, in some kind of combination—a paradoxical combination, as it would certainly have to seem to later orthodox Christians—with an adherence to Jesus as the Messiah. Here in Ephesus, for example, Saint Paul ‘found some *disciples*,’ evidently meaning ‘disciples of Jesus Christ,’ whom he addressed as ones who earlier had become *believers*, presumably believers in Jesus Christ. Despite these titles, they had nevertheless been baptized only into the baptism of John.”³

“The **disciples** whom **Paul** encountered in **Ephesus** had never heard of the **Holy Spirit** or baptism into Christ (cp. 18:25). This is one of the most difficult NT passages to interpret. The basic question is whether these disciples were genuine Christians when Paul first met them. Some argue that they were not since they had neither received the Holy Spirit nor been baptized into Christ. Others insist that they were genuine Christians who had not yet received full knowledge of the faith. Numerous incomplete forms of Christianity were being spread in the early years of the church. The apostles obviously felt that it was important to check the progress of such strains and correct them, bringing the full and complete gospel message to would-be disciples. By John’s own confession his baptism was incomplete. He urged those whom he baptized to **believe in the one who would come after him** (see Matt. 3:11). The order of conversion here follows the typical pattern in Acts except for the laying on of **hands**, the mention of **other tongues**, and the ability to prophesy as immediate results of the Spirit’s coming.”⁴

Point 2: Persevere in the work of the gospel (Acts 19:8-10).

“As before, some of the Jews refused to believe (**19:9a**). They were like Pharaoh (Ex. 7:4) in refusing to recognise that God was at work in a new way. More than that, they publicly slandered the Way (as the Christian faith was then called). So Paul turned to focus on instructing disciples and convincing others who came to listen to the daily discussions he conducted (**19:9b**). He continued doing this for two years. Because Ephesus was such an important city, his strategic ministry there reached beyond the city to Jews and Gentiles throughout the province of Asia (**19:10**).”⁵

“Since Paul’s bold speaking in the Ephesian synagogue was creating friction that would have disturbed Sabbath gatherings, Paul turned away from that setting and moved elsewhere, with a group of disciples accompanying him, to teach for two more years in the city. Whereas in Corinth he only moved next door to the house of Titius Justus, in Ephesus he established a daily routine of discussions in ‘the lecture hall’ (*scholē*) of Tyrannus (v. 9) ... What we are informed about is that due to Ephesus’s strategic location and as a result of Paul’s extended period of preaching, ‘all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord’ (19:10). This need not imply that the entire population of the province heard the gospel preached in Ephesus but only that from this place the gospel spread throughout the region.”⁶

Point 3: Pursue transformation through the power of the gospel (Acts 19:18-20).

“The Ephesian abandonment of magic was not without some personal sacrifice. Their magical books must have been much like the papyrus collections that have been unearthed and are now on display in museums in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and London. All ancient books were expensive, but magical collections brought a considerable premium. Luke estimated the value of those burned in Ephesus at 50,000 pieces of silver. If the piece of silver concerned is the drachma, the most common Greek silver coin, that would come to about \$35,000 in current silver value. Translated into terms of living standards, however, the sum was greater still, since the drachma was an average day’s wage. Verse 20 provides a summary of Paul’s Ephesian ministry, much like the summaries at 6:7 and 12:24, which also refer to the growth of the word. The word bore fruit as more and more people responded in faith to the preaching of Paul and to the witness of the Ephesian Christians through such examples as their personal sacrifice in the public burning of their magical books. As a summary v. 20 provides a closure to Luke’s treatment of Paul’s Ephesian witness.”⁷

“Let those who accuse Christ’s disciples of being magicians be refuted by this reading, since it shows clearly that all magic is destroyed by the power of their teaching. See these people, not being incompetent but having great ability in this art, after being purified of the magical arts or of their customary demons, how they gathered together all the books of magic and burned them before all present at that time, even though they were of great value.”⁸

References

1. Tony Merida, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Acts* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2017) [Logos].
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3. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Acts*, in *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005) [Logos].
4. Stanley E. Porter, “Acts,” in *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007), 1754, n. 19:1-6; n. 19:4; n. 19:5-7.
5. Babu Immanuel Venkataraman, “Acts,” in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1496.
6. Dean Pinter, *Acts*, in *The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019) [Logos].
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8. Didymus the Blind, *Catena on the Acts of the Apostles 19:19-20*, in *Acts*, ed. Francis Martin, vol. V in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006) [Logos].