

Acts: Expand (Acts 18:1-22)
For the week of May 29, 2016

Background

Corinth was the political and commercial center of Greece, surpassing Athens in importance. It had a reputation for great wickedness. A temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love and war, had been built on the large hill behind the city. People would worship the goddess by giving money to the temple and taking part in sexual acts with male and female temple prostitutes. Paul found Corinth a challenge and a great ministry opportunity. Later, he would write a series of letters to the Corinthians dealing in part with the problems of immorality. Two of these letters are 1 and 2 Corinthians.

1. Acts 18:1-3. Married couples can have a powerful impact for the Lord. Look at Aquila and Priscilla. Their story is told in Acts 18 (they are also mentioned in Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). They are never mentioned separately in the Bible. In marriage and ministry, they operated as one.

a. How can a couple have an effective ministry together, even if they have different career paths? Give examples.

b. How can the home be used for evangelism? Do you open up your home for evangelism?

c. After reading what this couple said to Apollos (Acts 18:24-26), why is encouragement from other believers so important in our walk with the Lord?

2. Agree or disagree? Christian author John Stott said the following about Paul and us and evangelism. What do you think? Discuss in your group. Here is his comment:

“When we contrast much contemporary evangelism with Paul’s, its shallowness is immediately shown up. Our evangelism tends to be focused on simply inviting people to church. Paul also took the gospel to the secular world. Our evangelism appeals to the emotions for a decision without an adequate basis of understanding. Paul taught, reasoned and tried to persuade. Our evangelism is superficial, making brief encounters and expecting quick results.”

3. Acts 18:9-10.

a. We often think of Paul as being fearless, but in this passage he is afraid. God seeks to assure him in verses 9-10. Have you ever been afraid of stepping out for God? Did God make promises to you similar to those in verses 9-10? Discuss in your group.

b. To walk by faith means to see opportunities even in the midst of opposition. A pessimist sees only the problems. An optimist sees only the potential. A realist sees the potential in the problem. Paul was not closing his eyes to the many dangers and difficulties in the situation at Corinth; instead, he was looking at them from the divine point of view. How do you view walking by faith? Are you a pessimist, optimist or realist? Discuss!

4. Acts 18:10. God told Paul in a vision that "...many people in this city belong to me." Let's identify all those identified in the Bible who became Christians in Corinth:

Phoebe (Romans 16:1)

Tertius (Romans 16:22)

Erastus (Romans 16:23)

Quartus (Romans 16:23)

Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11)

Gaius (1 Corinthians 1:14)

Stephanas and his household (1 Corinthians 16:15)

Fortunatus (1 Corinthians 16:17)

Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:17)

Has God used you in reaching others for Jesus Christ? List by name the people that have become Christians through your involvement. After making your list, rejoice and give God praise and then pray for them and their continued spiritual maturity and for the Lord to continue to use you in reaching others for Him.

5. RECAP AND SHARE. This is our last time together as a group before breaking for the summer. Take some time to recap and share among your group. The topics are up to each group but here are some suggestions:

a. How has God brought you closer to Him during this past year?

b. How has your group been a help in spiritual growth during this past year?

c. What key theme(s) have you seen as we have looked at Acts 1-18?

d. Where has God challenged you?

e. Invite long-term prayer requests from each member in your group. Close your time with extended prayer for these requests.