**Sermon Based Community Group Leader Guide**

**Acts 19**

**\* Read Acts 19. Open in Prayer.**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will emphasize the power of God to bring fear, faith, and freedom to those who know and follow Him. His outline will be the following: the exposing of false worship and the calling to true worship. In this sermon, he will focus in on Acts 19:11-20, calling us to know and follow Jesus by fearing Him and following Him through bearing fruit in keeping with repentance.

**\* Prompt Questions**

1. Was there anything that stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Are there any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the sermon?

2. How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

3. What was the take away from the sermon for you? If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

4. How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week? How can we be praying for you specifically?

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to get through every one of these questions. I have given them in hopes that they will drive us back to the text so that we may diligently search the Scriptures as the Bereans did (Acts 17:10-15). These questions will give us a grasp of what the text says/means so that we can apply the text to our lives. I would encourage you to spend the majority of your time on application questions so that we can become “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

**1. What is the context of Acts 19?**

*Luke wrote Luke and Acts (written around A.D. 62) to Theophilus in order to give him an accurate account of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and to tell how Jesus continues to work through Spirit-empowered witnesses to carry the gospel to the end of the earth without hindrance and with boldness. Acts 1:8 serves as the theme verse of the book and as the outline for the book, for chapters 1-7 focus on Jerusalem, chapters 8-12 focus on Judea and Samaria, and chapters 13-28 focus on the end of the earth. The risen Lord sends His Spirit to empower followers of the Way to be witnesses who proclaim the kingdom of God to the end of the earth.*

*Acts 19 is all about the transformative power of the gospel. In Acts 19:1-7, Luke describes how the gospel redeems and restores about twelve men, symbolizing the movement of the gospel to the Gentiles that is promised in Acts 1:8. In Acts 19:8-10, Luke highlights the gospel pattern of Paul’s ministry, which leads to the kingdom of God (or the word of the Lord) being proclaimed to all the residents of Asia. In Acts 19:11-20, Luke contrasts the transformative power of the gospel with the defective/deficient power of magic, and the Lord uses this contrast to bring awakening to the believers in Ephesus as indicated in verses 17-20. In Luke 19:21-41, Luke describes the travel plans of Paul as well as the gospel impact on the city of Ephesus that leads to hostile opposition. Luke reminds us in Acts 19 that the power of the gospel is unstoppable, that the power of the gospel is transformative, and the power of the gospel is saving/sanctifying/freeing.*

*Note that many scholars estimate that Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire with a population of 200,000 to 400,000. It was a religious and commercial hotspot as the host of the temple of Artemis (one of the seven ancient wonders of the world) It boasted of an amphitheater that would hold about 24,000 people. With all of the political, cultural, and commercial appeal of Ephesus, this was a wonderful base of operations for Paul from which to proclaim the gospel in Asia Minor, leading to disciples made and churches planted (like the seven churches Revelation 2-3).*

*Tony Merida writes, “This story shows us how we advance the kingdom of Christ. It’s not by weapons, force, or violence. Paul preaches the gospel; people get converted; they renounce sin and idolatry; and by the power of the Spirit, the whole social order is impacted. Don’t underestimate the power of the gospel. Keep exalting Christ in cities filled with idols.”*

*Darrell Bock writes, “In sum, this is the major unit in Acts showing how the transformation of a community affects the culture at large, making it so nervous that it reacts to stop the progress. Luke does not speak of a campaign against others but of the presence of effective internal reform. What affects the commerce of idolatry in Ephesus is apparently not a program to stamp out magic but the change of lifestyle among the believers, which entails separating themselves from such practices. The prospect that others would be so influenced is what causes the Ephesian community to react in fear and hostility.” He continues, “The second lesson of the unit is that those who do not wish to be transformed will often react with hostility to the evidence of a lifestyle that challenges their own. Once again, however, the believers are not on a campaign against others. They allow the difference in lifestyle to speak for itself, and they trust in God’s protection in the midst of the testimony. This protection comes in part from outsiders who also have a sense of justice and fairness. When those who desire fairness speak up, the church is protected.”*

**2. What is going on in Acts 19:1-7?**

*In keeping his word from Acts 18:19-21, Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey to preach the kingdom of God. In Ephesus, Paul encountered the Ephesian twelve who for whatever reason had never heard of the Holy Spirit. Presumably, beginning with the baptism of John, Paul told of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and then of the ministry of Jesus continued through the work of the Spirit in building His church from every nation, tribe, people, and language. In response to the message of Jesus, the Ephesian twelve were baptized in the name of Jesus, which means to identify with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection and to live out the character of Christ for the remainder of their lives. When Paul lad hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, leading to their speaking in tongues and prophesying. Once again, Luke highlights these God ordained and Spirit defined moments of the realization of Acts 1:8 (see how the geographical areas of Acts 1:8 are highlighted in the events of Acts 2, 8, 10-11, 19).*

*As you read this passage, ponder these questions: What are the similarities and differences between the Ephesian twelve and Apollos? Why are water baptism and Spirit baptism so important in the lives of believers? Who are examples of religious people who claim to be believers but are not indwelt by the Spirit of God?*

*For a believer being one who is indwelt by the Spirit, see John 3:5; 14:17; Acts 11:17; Romans 8:9, 14-16; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 3:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 3:16; 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 6:4; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:24; 4:13.*

*Of the Ephesian twelve, John Stott writes, “In a word, they were still living in the Old Testament which culminated with John the Baptist. They understood neither that the new age had been ushered in by Jesus, nor that those who believe in him and are baptized into him receive the distinctive blessing of the new age, the indwelling Spirit.”*

*Of the Ephesian twelve, John Polhill writes, “Unlike Apollos, who had already been instructed in ‘the way’ and who accurately taught about Jesus, this group was totally unacquainted with the gospel. They knew only John’s preparatory message (see Luke 3:15-17).”*

*Concerning tongues and prophecies, Tony Merida writes, “What should we make of these disciples speaking in other tongues and prophesying after believing? These signs, like those experienced by the believers in Samaria, were visible and public indicators that they possessed the Spirit. But this pattern is not universal in Acts. Not every convert experiences such manifestations. The norm is repentance and faith in Jesus and possession of the Spirit. And the visible profession of faith is baptism.”*

*Concerning tongues and prophecies, Sinclair Ferguson writes, “Samaria (Acts 8) and Caesarea (Acts 10-11) are staging posts in the advance of the programme of Acts 1:8; Ephesus (Acts 19) marks the transition from the world of the old covenant and John’s baptism, to the world of the new covenant and the Spirit baptism that comes from Christ. Within the book of Acts (whatever else may be true of the rest of the New Testament), the tongues of Pentecost are not thought of as a normally repeated element in the initiation experience of later believers.”*

*About Acts 19:6, the ESV Study Bible states: “****The Holy Spirit came on them****means they received the new covenant fullness and power of the Holy Spirit, something that happened to Jesus’ disciples for the first time on the day of Pentecost. They had not previously known about Jesus’ death and resurrection, so their earlier belief (in Acts* [*19:2*](https://www.esv.org/Acts+19%3A2/)*) was one of looking forward to the Messiah to come, a state similar to that of Old Testament believers. Their****speaking in tongues and prophesying****was an outward demonstration and verification of their receiving the Spirit.”*

**3. What is going on in Acts 19:8-10?**

*In Acts 19:8-10, Luke highlights the normal pattern of Paul’s ministry—first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. In Ephesus, Paul began his time by boldly preaching the kingdom of God for three months until the Jews rejected the gospel. After this, Paul proclaimed the word of the Lord in the hall of Tyrannus for two years, leading to all the residents of Asia hearing the gospel.*

*As you read this passage, think about these questions: What does the length of Paul’s time in Ephesus teach us about our own evangelistic efforts, specifically related to patient, relationship building, conversational tone, etc.? If you had to describe what is meant by the phrase, “kingdom of God,” what would you say? How are we to respond when people reject the gospel? Where are places where we can connect with and engage unbelievers? Do we have a burden to proclaim the gospel to every resident of Louisville? If not, how can we cultivate such a burden and passion/zeal to reach our city with the gospel of Jesus Christ?*

*Derek Thomas writes, “In a sense, the whole message of the Old Testament Scriptures is about the kingdom of God, even though the phrase itself occurs only seven times! But the message of a coming Ruler who will establish his kingdom is everywhere. It is the message of the Old Testament. God intends to restore that which Satan destroyed in Eden. He intends to win back his rebellious people and set them in a place where the King is glorified and honored. This was Paul’s burden, persuading the Jews that the Messiah looked for had already come and his name was Jesus.”*

**4. What is going on in Acts 19:11-20?**

*Like the ministry of Jesus, Paul’s ministry is both a word and deed ministry. In verses 11-12, Luke highlights the miraculous work of God through the hands of Paul as many were healed of diseases and freed from demons by contact with handkerchiefs/aprons that had been touched by Paul. Against this backdrop of the power of God, Luke notes the powerlessness of magic/idols in the event of the sons of Sceva. Similar to the Ananias and Sapphira incident in Acts 5, God once again uses an event of shocking proportions to lead many to Himself. Rather than driving out the demons, the sons of Sceva were driven out of the house naked and wounded. The contrast between the power of God versus the powerlessness of magic/idolatry led to an awakening in Ephesus: reverent fear of God fell, name of the Lord Jesus extolled, believers repented, and the word of the Lord increased and prevailed mightily.*

*As you read this passage, dwell on these questions: How have you seen the power of God on display this week? How have you seen the powerlessness/hopelessness of idols? Have you seen God use an event/circumstance in your life to bring transformation/revival in your life? As you look at verses 17-20, what characterizes a repentant heart, or put another way, one who knows and follows Jesus? What does repentance look like in your life right now?*

*For passages concerning miraculous healings similar to that in verses 11-12, see Mark 5:27-34; 6:56; Acts 5:15. For passages highlight the progress of “the word of the Lord,” see Acts 2:41; 6:7; 12:24; 13:49; 19:10, 20. For other examples of magic/demonic powers confronted by the power of the gospel, see Acts 8:9-13; 13:6-11; 16:16-18; 19:19. Also, see 1 Corinthians 10:20; Ephesians 6:12.*

*The ESV Study Bible states: “As previously in Acts, miracles opened the door for hearing the gospel and gave confirmation that God himself was working through Paul and his message.”*

*Tony Merida writes, “In this case, in a city steeped in superstition and interest in magic, God kindly condescended to show the Ephesians his sovereign power in a way that would get their attention and draw them to the Savior.” Merida writes, “All of this points to the fact that what turned Ephesus upside down was Paul’s message. The miracles confirmed the validity of Paul’s message, displayed the superior power of Jesus over all other forms of power, and were, indeed, impressive. But let’s not lose sight of what was primary: the exposition of the Word.”*

*John Polhill writes, “Perhaps it (the mode of the miracles) is to be viewed as God’s accommodation to the mind-set of the people of that age. In any event, the miracles wrought by the apostles are never presented as ends in themselves but always as opportunities, assistance to faith and commitment. That is true in the present instance. The power of God manifest in Paul’s miracles ultimately led to the Ephesians’ overcoming their magic and superstition.”*

*About the act of repentance, Derek Thomas writes, “What they did gave evidence of genuine repentance and a desire to turn away from a lifestyle now thought to be evil. It was a demonstration of their devotion to Jesus Christ. They had been touched by the gospel. They wanted to have nothing whatsoever to do with their sinful past; burning these books served both as a public display of their repentance and as a way of ensuring that temptation to return to their former practices would prove impossible.”*

**5. What is going on in Acts 19:21-41?**

*In Acts 19:21-22, Luke notes the travel plans of Paul, which give the outline and focus of the remainder of the book of Acts. Paul resolves to strengthen the churches in Greece (Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth), to collect a relief offering from these churches to carry to the churches of Judea and Samaria (which is why he sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia ahead of him), to return to Jerusalem again, and to go to Rome and beyond to proclaim the name of Christ where Christ is not named. After Paul’s travel plans, Acts 19:23-41 describes the riot in Ephesus in three movements: (1) the speech of Demetrius (vv. 23-27), (2) the formation of the confused/angry mob (vv. 28-34), and (3) the speech of the city clerk (vv. 35-41). First, Demetrius gathers his fellow tradesmen to provoke them to action against the Way because of the economic, religious, and cultural impact that the gospel was having on Ephesus. Second, out of defense of their way of life, the mob shouted of the greatness of their Artemis, leading to confusion of the mob and the hushing of their opponents. Finally, the town clerk spoke to warn the mob that they need to follow the proper way of lodging charges against the Way lest they bring the wrath of the Romans upon them and to declare that the followers of the Way have broken no laws. In short, what we see in verses 23-41 is the reaction of the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Light exposing and overcoming the darkness.*

*As you read this passage, think about these questions: How do you see the deception of sin at work in Demetrius and the mob? What idols do we cling to and struggle with today? Where are areas in our culture where the light of Christ ought to be shining most clearly because of the contrast between Christianity and the values of the surrounding culture? How can we as a community group live holy lives that is recognizable as the power of Christ at work through us?*

*Note the mention of the Way in verses 9, 23. In both instances, the Way is causing a disturbance. In other words, the gospel is impacting/transforming the culture. Do we see the kingdom of Christ impacting/transforming the culture around us, beginning with lives being transformed?*

*For Paul’s travel plans, see 1 Corinthians 16:1-10; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Acts 20:1-2; Romans 15:23-28. For Paul’s journey to Rome, see Acts 19:21-22; 20:23; 21:11, 13; 23:11; 27:23-25.*

*For Timothy and Erastus, see 1 Corinthians 16:5-10. For Erastus the Corinthian, see Rom 16:23; 2 Tim 4:20. For use of the “Way,” see Acts 9:1-2; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22. For idolatry, see Isaiah 44:9-20; 46:1-7; Romans 1:18-32.*

*Concerning Paul sending Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, John Polhill writes, “The primary mission of these two in Macedonia likely was in connection with Paul’s collection for Jerusalem.”*

*Darrell Bock writes, “So profit, turning from gods, and the fall of Artemis are all put forward as reasons for concern….For Demetrius, the threat is economic, cultural, and religious (Roloff speaks of a combination of religious, patriotic, and business interests). For Luke, the battle Paul wages is not a political one with Rome but with a worldview that takes people captive into empty idolatry.”*

*Derek Thomas writes, “What sparked this great unrest in Ephesus? The answer must surely have been the cumulative effect of a community of believers whose lives had been transformed by the gospel. They had burned books of magic arts estimated in today’s currency as worth millions of dollars. The gospel had changed not only themselves but the life of the city itself. Commerce, education, art, and relaxation—everything had changed. Slowly, perhaps, and almost imperceptibly, the gospel was perceived by the folk in Ephesus to be life-changing. Professing Jesus Christ brought social changes.” He continues, “The gospel had challenged the culture of the city, regarded not as something inherently neutral, but as bearing the marks of a fallen world and misplaced devotion. Christianity changes more than just the hearts of men and women; it changes the culture in which they live. By giving them different interests and concerns, Christianity had now given Ephesus a different hue.”*

*About the “Asiarchs,” John Polhill writes, “Their primary role seems to have been connected with the maintenance of the imperial cult in Asia. Significantly, they are described as Paul’s ‘friends,’ indicating that Paul was well-respected by his fellow Roman citizens in high places. Their gesture in this instance was entirely friendly because they were concerned for Paul’s personal safety.”*

*About the legality of Christianity, John Polhill writes, “One finds in this episode a theme that will continue to recur in the subsequent narrative of Acts—the innocence of the Christians with respect to the civil law. Paul was never found guilty by any Roman official. On the contrary, even if only implicitly, they pled his case, as with the friendly Asiarchs and the town clerk in this instance.”*

*The ESV Study Bible states: “Luke’s extensive report of the careful reasoning of the town clerk may have provided an important basis with which Christians in other cities could have defended themselves, since Luke shows here that the Christian gospel was not contrary to the Roman rule of law and was not disruptive of public order, and that accusations made to that effect were untrue.”*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions. I’ve tried to offer enough for you to pick the ones you think will best fit your group, as you know what your ladies or men are going through at this time and may need to hear. Also, please note that these questions might be adjusted to reflect what the pastor calls us to do in application of the sermon.

1.What is meant by the phrase, “kingdom of God”? What is the gospel? What does one who is baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus picture/portray in their baptism? How can we discern if one knows and follows Jesus?

2. In Acts 19:8-10, Luke once again tells us the pattern of Paul’s evangelistic ministry. In our own lives, when was the last time that we had a gospel conversation with someone? How are we engaging and connecting with unbelievers where we live, work, and play? How can we as a community group do missions together? Take time to write out ways we can engage and connect with unbelievers personally and corporately. Help one another think through how to leverage their neighborhoods/workplaces/hobbies for the sake of sharing the gospel.

3. What are idols (money, job, marriage, kids, etc.) that you have learned from personal experience do not satisfy and do not save? How might the powerlessness of the magic practiced by the sons of Sceva remind us of the powerlessness of those idols/sins which we know do not save/satisfy/sanctify?

4. As you look at Acts 19:17-20, what are characteristics that should mark the lives of those who know and follow Jesus? Do you see these characteristics evident in your own lives? How does God use the event of the sons of Sceva to bring this awakening (compare this event to results that happened after Ananias and Sapphira event in Acts 5)? Take time to pray for your group and for our church that it would be evident that we are those who know and follow Jesus.

5. What is repentance? How do we see the fruit of repentance in Acts 19:18-19? What are sins that you struggle with or that you see our church struggling with? What would it look like for us to bear fruit in keeping with repentance?

6. In Acts 19:22, we are reminded that Paul is not doing ministry alone, but rather he equips and entrusts others (like Timothy and Erastus) to do the work of the ministry (see Ephesians 4:11-16). In your own life and in your own community group, how can we equip and entrusts others to do the ministry? How is it helpful for us to remember that we are one body with a diversity of gifts/roles? What are responsibilities/roles in your community group that others can be equipped and entrusted to do for the building up of the group/body?

7. In Acts 19:23-27, Demetrius highlights the transformative power of the gospel, although he is doing it for the purpose of stopping the gospel. In your own life, how have you seen the gospel transform your life—your thinking, feeling, doing, motivations/desires? How have you seen the gospel at work in transforming believers at Highview in the past month? Take time to praise the Lord for how His gospel is transforming/sanctifying His children.

8. In our culture, darkness/sinfulness is pervasive. In what areas ought the light of the gospel be shining brightest? What are practical ways that we can be salt and light in our community so that if Highview Baptist Church were to disappear tomorrow it would be evident to those in our community?

9. As you look at this passage, how does it call us to obedience and an others-focused mentality? Remember, Pastor Aaron is challenging us to be about obedience and others in 2018.

10. Here are some good questions to reflect on and act on this week (these were passed along to me by Pastor Aaron and Dr. David Jones):

A. What do you take as the main theme from this sermon?

B. What have you learned today about Jesus’ character that has affected you daily?

C. Do you have any clarifying questions concerning the sermon?

D. What did the Holy Spirit convict you of because of His Word today?

E. Will you ask forgiveness and what will you change?

F. Will you be willing this week to pass on to someone else what you’re learning about Jesus? How will you be intentional this week to do so?

11. In his book, Asking the Right Questions, Matthew Harmon gives the following instructions/questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like).

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing).

c. Look for God’s concerns (what things, events, people, he is concerned about).

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image.

b. Look for the fallen condition.

c. Look for how God’s people should live.

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for.

b. Look for sin to confess and repent.

c. Look for promises and truths to believe.

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others.

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others.

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others.

B. Applying the Bible

1. What does God want me to think/understand?

2. What does God want me to believe?

3. What does God want me to desire?

4. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

Fear Jesus and follow Jesus by bearing fruit in keeping with repentance!

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—1 Corinthians 12; Job 25-26

2. Tuesday—1 Corinthians 13; Job 27

3. Wednesday—1 Corinthians 14; Job 28

4. Thursday—1 Corinthians 15; Job 29

5. Friday—1 Corinthians 16; Job 30

6. Saturday—2 Corinthians 1; Job 31

7. Sunday—2 Corinthians 2; Job 32

* **Unhindered Series**

1. March 18th—Acts 19:1-41

2. March 25th—Acts 20:1-16

--. April 1st (Easter Sunday)

3. April 8th—Acts 20:17-30

4. April 15th—Acts 21:1-26

5. April 22nd—Acts 21:27-22:29

6. April 29th—Acts 22:30-23:35

7. May 6th—Acts 24:1-27

8. May 13th (Mother’s Day)—Acts 25:1-12

9. May 20th—Acts 25:13-26:32

10. May 27th (Memorial Day Weekend)—Acts 27:1-44

11. June 3rd—Acts 28:1-31

1. For this discussion guide, I used the following resources: Darrell Bock, *Acts;* I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*; John B. Polhill, *Acts*; Derek Thomas, *Acts*; R. Kent Hughes, *Acts*; R. C. Sproul, *Acts*; John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of* Acts; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in* Acts; ESV *Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)