

Acts 19:1-22

The Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit

Learning Objectives

- Show the Holy Spirit's presence (that He exists)
- Show we can actually believe in the Holy Spirit's power (that He can change my life and others')

? Icebreaker: Has there ever been a time when you were the last one to hear about something important that happened? What happened?

Possible Answers: Sporting event score, National news, life events

Introduce The Study (read out loud)

This passage discusses two responses to the Holy Spirit's presence: acceptance and rejection. The second half of the passage (verses 11-22) discusses how the Holy Spirit's power was used to further the Gospel, but was also misconstrued by those not following Christ.

Acts 19:1-10 (NIV)

¹ While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³ So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

⁴ Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

⁸ Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

Leader's note: It is possible at this point to get bogged down in questions regarding spiritual gifts, tongues, prophecy, etc. Try to push past these questions and focus on the study; if you get too far into these questions, you might consider referring those with more questions to the Hope sermon archives, as there was an eight-part series on spiritual gifts as part of the series on 1 Corinthians (filter on "The Bridezilla of Christ" for the series.)

? Why did these believers not have the Holy Spirit (v. 2)?

Possible Answer: Similar to Old Testament believers, they were looking forward to the Messiah to come - it was expected but they did not realize it was an accomplished fact.

? What are some examples of acceptance or rejection of the Holy Spirit evidenced in this passage? What could accepting or rejecting the Holy Spirit look like in today's world?

Possible Answer: Positive examples (accepting) - v. 2, 10. Negative (rejecting) - v. 9. As for our lives, accepting or rejecting could be as simple as following or ignoring the Spirit's prompting, or as serious as belief or unbelief.

? Optional Question (may be more useful for newer groups): Is anyone willing to share their story of when you first started following Jesus?

Possible Answer: If no one is willing to share, be prepared to share your own story of coming to faith in Jesus.

? In vs. 8 - 10, the passage discusses Paul sharing the Gospel for months (vs. 8) and years (vs. 10), and some listeners "refused to believe." Has there been a time when you have continually shared the Gospel with someone and they have rejected Jesus?

Possible answers: Answers will vary.

? What can we learn from Paul's example in sharing the "word of the Lord"?

Possible Answer: Perseverance despite rejection; faithfulness in sharing even when we do not always see results. Paul shared the "word of the Lord" boldly and persuasively; this does not mean that everyone believed his message.

Acts 19:11-22 (NIV)

¹¹God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

¹³Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." ¹⁴Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. ¹⁵One day the

"Paul then enquired about their baptism, and learned that it was the pre-Pentecostal baptism as proclaimed and administered by John the Baptist - a baptism of expectation rather than one of fulfilment, as Christian baptism now was. Accordingly, he explained to them the anticipatory character of the Johannite rite; it was closely bound up with John's proclamation of Jesus as the Coming One. But now that Jesus had come and accomplished His mission on earth, now that He was raised from the dead and exalted at God's right hand, whence He has send the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, an anticipatory baptism was inappropriate and inadequate." F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Acts*

evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” ¹⁶ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

¹⁷ When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. ¹⁸ Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. ¹⁹ A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. ²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

²¹ After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.” ²² He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer.

Leader’s note: If it comes up, a drachma would have been about an average day’s wages for a laborer (according to the ESV Study Bible), making 50,000 drachmas quite a large amount of money.

? Are there other examples in Scripture that you can think of where the Holy Spirit miraculously heals without human interaction (i.e., without even touching)?

Possible Answer: Mark 5:27, Mark 6:56, Acts 5:15 (Optional: read passages as a group)

? What do these examples tell us about how the Holy Spirit works?

Possible Answer: The objects used (cloak, handkerchief, etc.) were not “magical”; the Holy Spirit chose to manifest his power so strongly through Paul (or Peter, Jesus in the other passages) that the power of the Holy Spirit connected even to these objects.

? In contrast, how do individuals in vs. 13-14 misunderstand how the Holy Spirit works?

Possible Answer: They try to call on a Holy Spirit that they do not even have, as unbelievers. If they do not possess the presence of the Holy Spirit, they will not be effective in trying to use the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit chooses how/when to make his power known in order to advance the Gospel.

? Optional Question: Read Mark 4:26-29 (NIV). ²⁶ He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

What does this passage teach us about our responsibility in sharing the Gospel and the Holy Spirit’s ultimate role?

Possible Answer: We can sow the seed of the Gospel, but we can't make the seed grow; only the Holy Spirit can cause a seed to grow.

? What was the purpose or ultimate goal behind these extraordinary miracles?

Possible Answer: Miracles opened the door for people to believe in Jesus. They also gave confirmation that God was working through Paul and his message.

For Discussion and Accountability

? Even though we know it is the power of the Holy Spirit that convicts people of their need for Jesus, are there individuals with whom you could “plant the seed”?

? Is there anyone that you have been persevering in sharing Jesus with, for months and years like Paul, that we can pray for together right now?