



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N37 September 13, 2026

UNHINDERED

“When the Gospel Comes to Town”

Acts 19:1-41

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Church

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish his purposes on earth today.

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Ephesians 4:15-16



How important was the church in Ephesus?

Luke's description of the church in Ephesus provides a valuable example of God's use of the church to accomplish his gospel purposes. The city of Ephesus served as the strategic and intellectual nerve center for Paul's entire third missionary journey. As a bustling Roman metropolis and the home of the famous Temple of Artemis, it offered Paul a massive, diverse platform to spread early Christianity throughout Asia Minor.

Paul spent nearly three years in Ephesus—from September A.D. 53 to May A.D. 56—his longest stay in any single city. Here, he taught daily in the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus, a school that became a major training ground for sending out believers to plant new churches in neighboring regions. His ministry was so influential that it threatened the local economy, sparking a major riot led by silversmiths who made shrines for Artemis.

Ephesus is also highly significant because of the deep personal bonds Paul formed with its elders, culminating in a tearful farewell recorded in Acts 20. His work there provided the foundation for his vital New Testament letter, the Epistle to the Ephesians, which remains a foundational text on church unity and spiritual warfare.

According to one commentator, the church in Ephesus was responsible for planting churches throughout the Roman province. He writes: “Paul evidently began his third missionary journey, and his three-year ministry in Ephesus, in A.D. 53, twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the day of Pentecost. As a result of this three years of work, the local Christians preached the gospel and established churches all over the province of ‘Asia.’ Among these were the churches of Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis in the Lycus Valley (Col. 4:13), though evidently Paul did not

personally plant them (cf. Col. 2:1; 4:13). Perhaps the other churches in this area that are mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 (i.e., Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia) got their start at this time too” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 369, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf).

Timothy, and later the Apostle John, followed Paul in ministry in Ephesus. The Christians in that church became the original recipients of at least three New Testament books (Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy), and possibly as many as seven (1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation). To this church Jesus writes: “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary” (Rev 1:2-3).

While the details of the church's founding, its setting, and Paul's ministry in Ephesus cannot be duplicated today, it seems reasonable to believe that contemporary churches can and should mirror the mission-minded ministry of the believers in Ephesus. Paul's ministry there is in a way paradigmatic. In the same way that God opened a wide door of opportunity for Paul and for the church there, he has opened a similar door of opportunity for contemporary churches. The only thing to do is walk through that door and keep on walking. There are contemporary examples of Ephesus-like churches, namely, churches that, rather than focusing solely on gathering a massive crowd in one building, operate on the belief that the health of a church is measured by its “sending capacity,” not its “seating capacity.”

Read Acts 19:1-41**Acts 19:1-20**

1 And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." 4 And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." 5 On hearing this, they were baptized in 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 speaking in tongues and prophesying. 7 There were about twelve men in all.

8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims." 14 Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this. 15 But the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" 16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was

extolled. 18 Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. 19 And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Corinth" and "Ephesus" in v. 1.
- Circle "disciples" in v. 1.
- Circle "Holy Spirit" in vv. 2, 6.
- Circle "baptism" in vv. 3, 4.
- Bracket "When Paul had laid his hands on them" in v. 6.
- Double underline "three months" in v. 8, "two years" in v. 10, and note "a while" in v. 22.
- Circle "extraordinary" in v. 11.
- Circle "Sceva" in v. 14.
- Circle "books" in v. 19.
- Bracket "fifty thousand pieces of silver" in v. 19.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Paul came to Ephesus from *where* just after Apollos left Ephesus to go *where*?
 2. *How* would you describe the spiritual condition of “the disciples” that Paul met when he met them? Explain.
 3. *How* would you describe their spiritual condition when Paul left them? Explain.
 4. In the synagogue Paul *reasoned* and *persuaded* the Jews *about what* about the kingdom of God?
 5. *How long* did that go on and *why* did it end?
 6. *What* was Paul up to during his two-year stay in the hall of Tyrannus?
 7. *What* made the miracles God was doing by the hands of Paul extraordinary?
 8. Jewish itinerant exorcists’ attempt to expel a demon à la Paul backfired. How so?
 9. Summarize what resulted from their failed effort.
 10. **Discussion:** God did *extraordinary* things through the ministry of Paul in Ephesus so that “the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily”. Do you think the same thing is happening today?
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Commentary On The Text

Acts 19:1-41 is a long narrative account of Paul's ministry in Ephesus. Translators and commentators divide it into various numbers of episodes or scenes. The ESV divides it into three parts (vv. 1-10; 11-20; 21-41), the NIV just two (vv. 1-22; 23-41). One commentator divides it into four scenes (vv. 1-7; 8-20; 21-22; 23-41) (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, 595), another into five (vv. 1-7; 8-10; 11-20; 21-22; 23-41) (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Acts," 2026 ed., 359-78). This five-fold division best reflects obvious scene changes in the narrative. First, Luke describes Paul's encounter with some disciples of John the Baptist (vv. 1-7). Then he provides an overview of the apostle's three-year ministry in Ephesus (vv. 8-12), followed by a description of Paul's encounter with the seven sons of Sceva (vv. 11-20). Finally, Luke inserts a brief reference to the apostle's plan to visit Rome (vv. 21-22), before concluding with a detailed report of the citywide disturbance regarding "the Way," which was incited by Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis (vv. 23-41). This study will focus on verses 1-20, which describe Paul's ministry in Ephesus rather than verses 21-41, which describe the riot leading to his departure for Macedonia (20:1).

Paul's third missionary journey (Ac 18:23-21:16) lasted four years, more or less, from the spring of A.D. 53 to May of A.D. 57—three years of which were spent in Ephesus. It covered roughly 2,700 miles across the eastern Mediterranean and focused heavily on Paul's extended ministry in the city and his efforts to strengthen existing churches.

Apollos left Ephesus for Corinth in Achaia where he "powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus" (18:27-28); Paul then arrived from Antioch, after going from place to place "through the region of Galatia and Phrygia strengthening all the disciples" (18:22-23). Upon arrival the apostle met some disciples of John the Baptist (vv. 1-7). When asked, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" they answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Apparently, these men did not yet believe in Jesus. One commentator writes: "Here it seems, both from their own statements and from how Paul deals with them, that we should consider these men as sectarians with no real commitment to Jesus at all" (Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 493). However, upon hearing from Paul how Jesus had fulfilled the message of John, the forerunner's disciples submitted to Christian baptism "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (v. 5) and received the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues and prophesying (cf. Ac 2:4; 10:46).

Paul's ministry in Ephesus followed a well-established pattern. He went to the synagogue to per-

suaude Jews that Jesus was the Christ, come to establish the kingdom. True, Jesus died, but God raised him from the dead and seated him at his own right hand (Ac 2:22-36). Paul's synagogue ministry went on for three months until obstinate, unbelieving, outspoken members of the congregation spoke evil of the Way openly. "The Jews of Ephesus were evidently seriously divided over Christ. On the one hand, there were those who became believers. On the other, there were those who strongly opposed Paul. It would indeed be some of these 'Asian Jews' who would provoke mob action against Paul in Jerusalem (cf. 21:27f.)" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 401). Paul took those Jews who believed, called, "the disciples" (v. 9), with him and set up shop in the hall of Tyrannus where it is believed he lectured between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily (ESV *Study Bible* note on Ac 19:9) for two years. As a result, "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (v.10).

During his time in Ephesus, "God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul" (v. 11), that is, direct healings through the laying on of Paul's hands and indirect healings through the application of Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons. "So prominent was the divine presence in Paul's ministry at Ephesus, Luke tells his readers, that even such personal garments as Paul's sweat-cloths and work-aprons used in his trade of tent-making and leather working were taken out to the sick and demon possessed, and through their application there were cures" (Longenecker, 496). Such healings would have made an impression in a city that was the home of all sorts of magic and superstition. Of course, the virtue of these items lay not in the objects themselves but in the power of God. What was happening was truly "extraordinary" even in biblical terms.

Paul's miracle-working power caught the attention of a Jewish itinerant exorcist named Sceva and his seven sons. But when they tried to do what Paul could do by invoking the name of the Lord Jesus, it backfired. The possessed man whom they attempted to exorcise turned on them, overpowered them, and left them bruised and bloodied—the evil spirit having said to them, amusingly, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?" (v. 15). Word of the incident spread throughout Ephesus among both Jews and Greeks. The name of the Lord was extolled and many believers who formerly practiced magic brought their valuable books and burned them. In summary statements like the one found in verse 20 (see progress reports in 2:46-47; 6:7; 9:31; cf. 12:24; 16:5; 28:31), "So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily," Luke continues to give God the glory for the advance of the gospel.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 1 *Corinth, Ephesus* “Luke’s account of Paul’s third missionary journey is essentially a record of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, the city that he probably tried to reach at the beginning of his second journey (cf. 16:6)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 359, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf). “Ephesus became Paul’s base of operation during his third missionary journey. Ephesus was the home of the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple, according to its ruins, was 239’ wide and 418’ long, four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens! Ephesus was the leading city of the province of Asia. Its present-day extensive ruins reveal the glory of its past” (Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 409). “In Paul’s day, the zenith of Ephesus’s commercial power was long since past. Deepening economic decline had cast a shadow over the city. With the decline of its commerce, the prosperity of Ephesus became more and more dependent on the tourist and pilgrim trade associated with the temple and cult of Artemis” (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *John-Acts*, vol. 9, EBC, 492-93).

v. 1 *disciples* Interpreters debate whether the twelve men are believers or not. They clearly believed John’s message. They received John’s baptism and were John’s disciples. However, they did not believe in Jesus. “In the case of Apollos, John’s baptism led him to teach about Jesus because he accepted John’s testimony about the coming one and recognized Jesus as its fulfillment. However, the response by the so-called disciples to Paul’s first question in 19:2 seems to lead him to doubt whether they even know about Jesus and the need for faith in him (19:4)” (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 233). “They failed to recognize Jesus as the one whom John had proclaimed as the promised Messiah” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 399).

v. 2, 6 *Holy Spirit* “Paul’s question [v. 2] assumed two things: They were genuine Christians, since they professed to believe John the Baptist, and everyone who believes in Jesus possesses the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13) . . . Their response enabled Paul to see that his first assumption about these disciples was incorrect: they were probably not Christians” (Constable, 361, 62). These men did not receive the Holy Spirit when they believed John’s message because they did not yet believe in Jesus, namely, that Jesus was the one to whom John referred when he said, “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose

sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Mt 3:11; cf. Mk 1:7). They apparently had not heard that Jesus was the one prophesied by John to come in whom they were to believe (Jn 1:15, 21, 30).

vv. 3, 4, 5 *baptism, baptized* John’s baptism is not Christian baptism. The two water baptisms are contrasted in these verses.

v. 6 *laid his hands* . . . “It should be noted that the reception of the Holy Spirit in Acts does not follow any set pattern. He came into believers before baptism (Acts 10:44), at the time of or after baptism (8:12-16; 19:6), and by the laying on of apostolic hands (8:17; 19:6). Yet Paul declared (Ro. 8:9) that anyone without the Holy Spirit is not a Christian” (Toussaint, 409). “The Spirit came at various times and in various ways. What is consistent is that the Spirit is always a vital part of one’s initial commitment to Christ and a mark of every believer” (Polhill, 400).

vv. 8, 10, 22 *three months* . . . Paul spent nearly three years in Ephesus from September A.D. 53 to May A.D. 56 (Harold Hoehner, “A Chronological Table of the Apostolic Age” in *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament* by H. Wayne House, 130) — “three months,” “two years,” and “awhile.”

v. 11 *extraordinary* “An understatement” (Polhill, 401). “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 (cf. notes on 3:1-26; etc.)” (*ESV Study Bible* note on Ac 19:11).

v. 14 *Sceva* Not on the list of high priests up to the fall of the temple, according to Josephus (Polhill, 403). “Undoubtedly, the title ‘Jewish chief priest’ was a self-designation manufactured to impress their clients and is reported by Luke without evaluation” (Longenecker, 497-98).

v. 19 *books* “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 (Polhill, 405-406) — if 50,000 drachmas, 50,000 days’ wages.



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

God did extraordinary things through the ministry of Paul in Ephesus that resulted in the word of the Lord spreading widely and growing in power.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does the author of this passage want me to *know*?

2. What does the author of this passage want me to *do*?

3. What does the author of this passage want me to *be*?



PARENT CONNECTION

Taylor grew up in a confused home. His mom was a nonpracticing Mormon, and his dad, because he grew up in the Bible Belt and had heard about Jesus along the way, claimed he was a “Christian.” In elementary school some students asked Taylor where he went to church. His dad said, “You tell them you’re Christian.” When I overheard this exchange in their home, the words of Inigo Montoya immediately came to my mind, “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.” There is a clear difference between knowing about Jesus and being in a deep, abiding, trusting relationship with the Savior of the world. Many people, children and adults, think because they grow up in America, their parents took them to church every once in a while, and there’s a Bible somewhere in the house, they are Christian. But that’s not actually the truth. The Christian faith isn’t inherited, like brown eyes or a tall frame. True faith is a response to the message of the Gospel, personally embraced as a decision, through faith, to heed the Spirit’s calling and trust in Jesus as Savior. As parents, we are the primary disciplers of our kids. Though we have a million bullet points on our job description, our key role is to teach our kids about Jesus, lead them to faith, and in everything we say and do, point our kids to the cross. Don’t be discouraged if your kids aren’t quite there. Trust in the Lord and His timing. Don’t grow weary but, like Paul, persevere. We’re praying for you!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 19:1-41.

1. What did Paul teach for three months in Ephesus?
2. What happened after the believers burned their books of magic?
3. Why were the crowds worked up into confusion?

What Do You Think?

Why wouldn’t the disciples let Paul go into the crowd?

What Do You Do?

Have you ever told someone about Jesus? Ask the Spirit to lead you to share the Good News with someone this week.

CORE COMPETENCY: Church

I believe God uses the people in the church to do His work.

MEMORY VERSE: Lamentations 3:22-23

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week’s verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.