

LEAD SHEET

ACTS : You Won't Believe This! - WK. 6

A RIOT IN EPHEBUS

FEBRUARY 21, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

PERSONALIZE SCRIPTURE

If you want to know God better, memorize and apply His Word!

GETTING STARTED

We are going to study most of Acts 19 today, a passage that talks a lot about opposition. We have seen this elsewhere in Acts, but in this chapter it happens over the course of a few years, in a single place called Ephesus.

Paul faces opposition when people refuse to believe and speak unfavorably about the Gospel. False witnesses face opposition when they claim to draw from Jesus' power to cast out demons. Later, after years of the Gospel spreading in town, a full-blown riot ensues.

General Discussion:

- What would you say is the greatest opposition to the Gospel that exists today? (*Atheists, persecution, etc.*)
- What is the greatest opposition you have ever faced personally because of Jesus?
(*Allow students to share. Some students may not have faced spiritual opposition.*)

DIGGING IN

Read Acts 19:1-10

Discussion Questions:

1. When Paul gets to Ephesus, what does he find?
(*Some of Jesus' Disciples.*)

2. What do these Disciples need? (*The Holy Spirit.*)

3. Paul's influence is not limited to those twelve men whom he baptized, what else does he do? (*He preaches and teaches boldly for three months.*)

4. Is his audience receptive? (*Some are receptive, while others grew stubborn.*)

Paul spends years preaching and teaching. The result is that the Word of God spreads like wildfire. Paul is effective in arguing about the Word of God, but trouble is coming for Paul. The bolder he becomes, the more trouble he faces.

Read Acts 19:11-20

Discussion Questions:

1. Who are the seven sons of Sceva? (*The sons of a Jewish chief priest who attempted to cast out demons in the name of Jesus.*)

2. How does the evil spirit respond to them? (*“Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?”*)

3. Then what happens to the sons of Sceva? (*The man with the evil spirit jumps on them and beats them severely, causing them to run out of the house naked and bleeding.*)

4. What does this say about falsely claiming that you belong to Jesus? (*It is not something you want to do.*)

5. What does this event cause to happen in Ephesus? (*Fear seized the people, the name of Jesus was held in high honor, and many believed, sorcerers burned their scrolls publicly, the Word of God grew in power and spread widely.*)

Read Acts 19:23-41

Trouble is brewing in Ephesus; things will finally come to a head between those who believe in Jesus and those who stubbornly refuse to believe in Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who is Demetrius? *(A silversmith, who made shrines for the false god, Artemis.)*

2. How does Demetrius turn people against Paul? *(He convinces them that their businesses will suffer and the majesty of Artemis will be compromised if Paul continues to preach.)*

3. In verse 29, how does the incident escalate? *(The whole town is in an uproar. They capture two of Paul's friends, and things start to get out of control)*

There was no organization, everyone was confused, and the Bible actually says that, “most of the people did not even know why they were there.” The preaching, teaching, miracles, and all the other good that Paul and the other Christians had done caused quite a stir. The opposition was fierce, but, as we have seen elsewhere in Acts, that does not keep people from telling the Truth about Jesus.

MAKING IT REAL

Many of us do not live in a world where preaching about Jesus causes riots in our hometowns. Many of us do not speak boldly enough to face this sort of opposition. However, the passage we just read talks about three occurrences where boldness is met with negative consequences. All three incidents are lessons for us, too.

If People Do Not Listen, Move On

For two months, Paul teaches the Jewish community in Ephesus about Jesus, giving them an opportunity to accept the Gospel. However, many are stubborn and unreceptive. We read that Paul then decides to take his Message somewhere else because they would not accept Jesus' teachings.

General Discussion:

- What communities of people in our world today do you think are the hardest to reach with the Good News of the Gospel? *(Students are likely to respond “atheists” or maybe a false religion. What they say is less important than getting them to think about it.)*
- Does everyone deserve a chance to hear the Gospel? *(Yes, of course!)*
- Does Paul give up? *(Not at all, curious people still had a chance to hear the Gospel.)*
- Do you think Paul felt like he was wasting his time with those who refused to listen? *(Probably.)*
- Is there anyone in your life that you think just refuses to listen? *(Allow students to share.)*

For many of us, there is no one who truly refuses to listen because we are not intentionally sharing Jesus with others. Paul talks with these people often (we assume regularly, perhaps even daily). It is not that people stopped listening and Paul gave up, but rather they became hostile, so Paul left for his safety.

Sometimes, we share Jesus with people—regularly—and they do not listen. Instead, they go on the offensive and try to hurt or harm us. It is okay to leave them. We are not giving up on them if they reject the message. You can still pray for them and be open to discussing it with them later. Paul's example teaches us to move on and talk to others who may be more receptive.

Do Not Be Bold In The Name Of Jesus Unless You Are Connected To Jesus

The story of the seven sons of Sceva warns us of a different danger.

General Discussion:

- Do you remember what the demons said? *(They had heard of Jesus and Paul, but did not know who the sons of Sceva were.)*
- What is the danger of claiming to be connected to Jesus when you are not? *(You have no actual power to fight or act under that authority.)*
- Do you think that people react to us based more on what we say or how we live? *(Most students will acknowledge we have to back up our words with actions.)*

It may be that no one ever attacks you because you are not living for Christ. Do not be the kind of Christian who talks a lot about Jesus but then does not live like a follower of Jesus. We all know people who wear Christian t-shirts or go to church but do not live out their faith. This type of testimony comes across as fake, inauthentic, and does the Kingdom of God no good.

Be connected to Jesus spiritually if you are going to claim to be a witness for Jesus.

If People Just Want to Fight, Don't Engage

Eventually, Paul's ministry comes to a head in the form of community-wide riots. You have probably never ministered so much that you caused this kind of effect, but you may well face extreme opposition in other ways.

General Discussion:

- Have you ever met someone who, when you tried to talk about Jesus, just wanted to argue science or some other side issue? *(Many older students will certainly have encountered this.)*
- How can you tell if someone is sincerely asking questions or just trying to cause an argument? *(Tone of voice, body language, sincere questions, etc.)*

- Why isn't it wise to get in to a religious debate? *(Some people just want to argue, while others may be closed-minded or even hostile towards the Gospel.)*
- How can you avoid getting into these kinds of arguments? *(Establish a relationship with someone before you share the Gospel with him or her, do not try to force your beliefs on others, give others a chance to talk about their doubts or concerns.)*

We are not told to go and be arguers for Jesus. We are called to be witnesses for Jesus. You can win an argument but lose influence with someone for Jesus. So be wise in whether or not you speak up when someone may just be trying to trap you into an argument. Wise Christians kept Paul out of this riot. You may need to make a similar decision to move on and talk to someone who may be more receptive. Even Jesus moved on when people were unreceptive to His Message.

We all want to be a Paul, but we all have someone like Demetrius who opposes us. We all have a time when we need to move on. We want God to move powerfully among us, but we have to exercise wisdom on when to be vocal and when to be quiet.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray for your students to have a real relationship with Jesus Christ and that they make wise choices on when and with whom to share the Gospel.