

## Passage Study Guide - Acts 19:11-20

Series: Acts



1. From this episode, how would you describe the people of Ephesus?
2. Why did the sons of Sceva fail to exercise the evil spirit with Jesus' name? How did God use this incident to glorify the name of Jesus even though the exorcism ended in failure?
3. Why do you think the Ephesian Christians continued to practice magic arts even though they believed in the gospel?
4. Why did the Ephesian believers renounce their magic arts and burn their magic books? What does it reveal about their convictions before and after the exorcism episode?
5. What was the impact of their actions (v18-20)?

6. Practising magic and sorcery was the norm for Ephesians, and the Ephesian believers were no exception, although they had placed their faith in Jesus. Consider the following things that are normal or accepted in our culture:

- Stress
- Complaining or gossiping
- Self-actualisation
- A consumeristic attitude towards life and relationships
- Accumulation of wealth for our future
- Sexualised culture (e.g. normalising pornography, "sexual health" and "sexual freedom")

Which of the above might we unthinkingly engage in although doing so runs contrary to the gospel?

7. How do those things we mentioned above run contrary to the life that Jesus calls us to live?
8. There could have been a variety of reasons why the Ephesian Christians continued to practice magic arts:
  - a) Did not see a connection between their faith and habit of magic
  - b) Trusted more in the magic arts to maintain control over their lives
  - c) Too costly to give up the magic arts after all they had invested
  - d) Too difficult to live counter to the culture

Consider what we engage in Q6 and the reasons above. Which of the reasons do we relate to the most?

9. Jesus died and was resurrected, overcoming the power of darkness for us. As we consider our responses in Q8, how does this truth change our lives so that our lives are conformed to His rule and reign?

10. Break into small groups and respond to King Jesus with faith and repentance, praying together to ask for His power to help us live transformed lives.

## Suggested Answers

1. From this episode, how would you describe the people of Ephesus?

Sample Answers:

- The people of Ephesus were religious and superstitious, as they believed strongly in sorcery and magic.
- Even the Ephesus Christians possess magic books and scrolls.
- The people of Ephesus were so obsessed with miraculous healing that they took handkerchiefs and aprons that touched Paul and tried to use these objects to attempt miraculous healing.

2. Why did the sons of Sceva fail to exercise the evil spirit with Jesus' name? How did God use this incident to glorify the name of Jesus even though the exorcism ended in failure?

Sample Answers:

- The sons of Sceva failed to exercise the evil spirit with Jesus' name because they did not truly believe in the gospel but only attempted to use Jesus' name and power for their own agendas. They thought foolishly that Jesus' name could be manipulated and used just like any other magical or exorcism formula.
- God used this incident to glorify Himself as the evil spirit answered that it recognizes the authority of Jesus and Paul, but not the sons of Sceva. God was glorified through Jesus in this incident as it revealed that Jesus' power and authority were real, tangible and above all other kinds of supernatural power, at the same time Jesus cannot be manipulated just like any other magical power or formula.

3. Why do you think the Ephesian Christians continued to practice magic arts even though they believed in the gospel?

Sample Answers:

- They might not have fully understood or comprehended the implications of the gospel.
- They might have been so entrenched in their superstitious ways of life and day-to-day living that it was not instinctive for them to renounce these beliefs.
- They might have felt that it was too costly to give these beliefs up.

4. Why did the Ephesian believers renounce their magic arts and burn their magic books? What does it reveal about their convictions before and after the exorcism episode?

Sample Answers:

- The Ephesians believers, through this episode, came to realise that since they became followers of Jesus, they should no longer participate and trust in magic and sorcery to guide their ways of life.
- They previously trusted in the power of magic and sorcery to guide their day-to-day lives.
- Now they have come to the realisation that since Jesus is the One True God and Sovereign Lord over all things, all other powers pale in comparison to Jesus. Therefore, they can abandon all their previous idolatry and trust in sorcery and obey, follow, and trust in the power of Jesus alone.

5. What was the impact of their actions (v18-20)?

Sample Answers:

- The Ephesians believers confessed and renounced their practices, and willingly burnt and destroyed all their magic books.
- The fact that they had willingly given up these former ways of living by burning the magic books, which cost up to fifty thousand pieces of silver, glorified Jesus as the worth and magnificent of the gospel was made known through this region.
- Through this reaction and seeing Jesus glorified, many people around the region came to believe in the gospel!

6. Practising magic and sorcery was the norm for Ephesians, and the Ephesian believers were no exception, although they had placed their faith in Jesus. Consider the following things that are normal or accepted in our culture:

- Stress
- Complaining or gossiping
- Self-actualisation
- A consumeristic attitude towards life and relationships
- Accumulation of wealth for our future
- Sexualised culture (e.g. normalising pornography, “sexual health” and “sexual freedom”)

Which of the above might we unthinkingly engage in although doing so runs contrary to the gospel?

Sample Answers:

- Because everyone else around me says that it is normal and even acceptable to consume media that is part of this sexualised culture, I give in because I don't want to be considered old-fashioned or conservative.
- Because the culture teaches me to live for myself, and to do everything I need to satisfy my own desires and longings, therefore I spend most of my time-consuming entertainment or framing my life decisions on maximizing comfort and happiness in this life.
- In my work environment, gossiping about other people is part of the culture. I don't want to stand out as a sore thumb, or risk being part of the subject of gossip and complaints.

7. How do those things we mentioned above run contrary to the life that Jesus calls us to live?

Sample Answers:

- Jesus has called us to live a life following God and obeying Him faithfully. Living for self-actualization and a consumeristic attitude runs contrary to living for God but centres life upon ourselves.
- Jesus has called us to live a life of sexual purity, upholding biblical sexual ethics and not entertaining any form of immorality, whether in speech, in thoughts, or in the kind of entertainment we consume.
- Jesus has called us to live a life that is marked by love, mercy, and grace. Gossiping and complaining about others run contrary to how Jesus viewed and interacted with others.
- These are also contrary to how Jesus lived and died for us out of love.

8. There could have been a variety of reasons why the Ephesian Christians continued to practice magic arts:

- a) Did not see a connection between their faith and habit of magic
- b) Trusted more in the magic arts to maintain control over their lives
- c) Too costly to give up the magic arts after all they had invested
- d) Too difficult to live counter to the culture

Consider what we engage in Q6 and the reasons above. Which of the reasons do we relate to the most?

Sample Answers:

- It is difficult to stand out from the culture around me.
- I don't see how faith in the gospel has implications for these areas of my life. I thought that going to church on Sunday is sufficient.
- I think it is too costly to build my life upon God, rather than living for myself.

9. Jesus died and was resurrected, overcoming the power of darkness for us. As we consider our responses in Q8, how does this truth change our lives so that our lives are conformed to His rule and reign?

Sample Answers:

- We were created to live in fellowship with God and to have His love, word, and authority govern our lives. However, sin has broken this fellowship and therefore our hearts were in bondage to all kinds of evil idols, which do not lead to our lives flourishing according to God's design but destroys us.
- Jesus' death has overcome the penalty and bondage of sin and therefore freed our hearts from the power of these evil idols, such as immorality, living selfishly for ourselves, fear of men, etc.
- Jesus' resurrection has proven His power and sovereign rule over all things. Therefore, we can trust in Him and His love to govern our life. We are also joined to His resurrection and are seated with Him in the heavenly places. Hence, we do not live according to this world, nor are we in bondage to temporal and broken realities, but we live according to the hope of future glory and renewal.

10. Break into small groups and respond to King Jesus with faith and repentance, praying together to ask for His power to help us live transformed lives.