



NG Study Guide: Acts 18:1-17 :: “The Power to Reach Your Community” [3.19.23]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: The essence of the Christian Life is to be disciples who live the Great Commandments to love God supremely, and love neighbors as self: and the Great Commission: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen (Matthew 28:19-20). Today, we discover that this is God’s plan to reach our community, and His world with the gospel.

Subject: Paul’s ministry at Corinth

Object: Reach your community for Christ

Context: Paul is on his second missions trip and has arrived in the southern area of Greece.

Let’s see how the Great Commission applied to Paul at Corinth, and to us as we reach our community for Christ:

A. Go (1-3) Engage your world for Christ (Go therefore)

After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. ³ So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

1. Paul goes to Corinth (1)

After these things (1), refers to Paul’s experience at Athens the great intellectual and cultural center. Paul had engaged people in the marketplace, and philosophers at the center of intellectual exchange at Mars Hill. At Athens, some mocked, others were curious, and some believed. Paul left Athens and went south to Corinth (1) the great commercial center and political capital of Southern Greece. At Corinth was the temple of Aphrodite (Venus) that hosted 1000 temple prostitutes. Corinth had a reputation like Las Vegas. Paul wrote “Romans” from Corinth and his description of Gentile immorality reflects Corinth. At Corinth, pride, pleasure, and the presence of wealth were a likely obstacle to seeing the need for God. Yet, Paul sought to see this community reached for Christ.

2. Paul connects with Aquila and Priscilla (2-3)

Aquila and Priscilla were driven from Rome when Emperor Claudius expelled the Jews in 49 A.D (2). It is uncertain whether they came to faith prior to or through Paul. Aquila and Priscilla were *tentmakers* or more accurately leather craftsmen. Paul was also of the same trade (3). The rabbinic tradition promoted working a trade to support oneself. Paul stayed with them and presumably worked alongside them. They used their career(s) to engage people and support themselves. Although Paul was entitled to financial support, he was sensitive to avoid any charge at Corinth that he was serving for financial gain (1Corinthians 9:6-15), a charge associated with itinerant preachers of religion who were not yielded to Christ. Later, financial support came from Philippi and Paul could focus more on calling than career.

Aquila and Priscilla are exemplary as a married couple who were serving Christ together. They sacrificed their comforts to reach a community for Christ. They hosted the church in their home (1Corinthians 16:19), and risked their life for Paul and the gospel (Romans 16:3-4). It is often easier to engage your world with others than alone.

B. Make disciples (4-8) Help people to follow Jesus

And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.⁵ When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. ⁶ But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” ⁷ And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸ Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

1. Proclaim the gospel to those who are interested (4-6)

At Corinth, Paul continued his practice of engaging people at the synagogue. There were Jews and Gentiles who were attracted to the God of the Jews (YHWH) in contrast to the pagan gods of the Greeks and Romans. These were people who had a worldview influenced by the Old Testament Scriptures. The message of the gospel, that people are made right with God through faith in Christ rather than performance of a moral code (the Mosaic law) is attractive, because it does not minimize God’s moral perfection or commandments, but assures acceptance through Christ. After several weeks, both Jews and Greeks were persuaded (4).

When Silas and Timothy came from Thessalonica and Berea (Macedonia) with good news about the church (1Thessalonians 3:6-10) Paul was led by the Spirit to boldly declare to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) (5). The Jews opposed Paul, and blasphemed (6). They were objecting to his declaring the deity of Christ. The Bible declares that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4), but also shows the plurality of God (e.g. Genesis 1:26 “Let us make man in our image”). The doctrine of the trinity shows one God manifest in three persons. Jesus affirmed His deity (John 8:58-59); and the Bible reveals God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When the Jews rejected the gospel, Paul focused on the Gentiles (6). Paul was willing to engage and spend time with those who were curious, but when someone rejected the gospel he would go to those who were interested.

2. Live the gospel for all to see (7-8)

Paul then moved to the house of Justus, a man who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue (7). *Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household* (8). Crispus is the head elder of the synagogue, and he and his family were very unlikely disciples. Coming to faith in Christ would undoubtedly impact his role in the synagogue, his social, personal, and business relationships. Yet, Crispus counted the cost and chose Christ and his family followed as well (Luke 9:23). Probably watching Paul, and other believers live out the gospel (love God and neighbors) right next door, after hearing the gospel, prompts them to believe by the Spirit.

C. Baptize (8) Identification with Christ

1. Help people to make Jesus their primary identity

And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Baptism is primarily a symbol of identification with Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6). Baptism is not a means to be saved. It is something that believers do once they are saved in obedience to Christ. Baptism is done as a public declaration of identification with Christ. Your identity with Christ is the only identity that cannot be taken from you.

D. Teach (11) Encourage Bible learning

1. Help people understand the Bible and live it

And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. The primary resource for people to become mature followers of Jesus is the Bible (Matthew 28:19-20, 2Timothy 2:2,15). Paul spent a year and a half at Corinth teaching the word. It is through the Bible that we discover God’s ideals for life in community with God and others. Through Bible learning, and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are transformed to become more like Jesus.

E. Jesus’ Presence (9-10) The encouragement of God with you

Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.”

1. Peace to proclaim (9)

Jesus encouraged Paul through a night vision. The Lord sought to strengthen Paul *to not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent*. Paul had been stoned and left for dead at Lystra (Acts 14) and faced recent persecution from Jewish leaders at Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17:1-15). The implication is that Paul was afraid. Paul would be opposed in Corinth (12-17). God wants us to have His peace to proclaim the gospel and not be afraid.

2. Protection (10, 12-17)

The reason why Paul could have peace to proclaim Jesus and His gospel was that Christ was with Him, *for I am with you*. Jesus assured Paul that *no one would attack or hurt him*. Paul was protected from Jewish and Roman opposition at Corinth (12-17).

When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, ¹³ saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law." ¹⁴ And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. ¹⁵ But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters." ¹⁶ And he drove them from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

Gallio was the Roman governor of southern area of Greece. He was the younger brother of Seneca, a famed philosopher and Nero's tutor. Jewish leaders requested Gallio to prohibit Paul from sharing the gospel but he refused. Thus Paul had the opportunity to share the gospel without opposition from Rome. Gentiles later beat Sosthenes the leader of the synagogue, and Gallio did not intervene (17). Thus it appears that Gallio was opposed to the Jews rather than pro-gospel. Regardless of Gallio, the reason Paul was protected was because Jesus promised to protect him.

God's presence and compassion for Paul's fears is not unique. God encouraged Joshua as he prepared to lead the conquest of the Promised Land, "I will never leave you, as I was with Moses, so shall I be with you (Joshua 1:5,9). Similarly, when he commissioned the disciples after His resurrection, He encouraged them, "I am with you always until the end of the (Church) age" (Matthew 28:20).

Purpose (10)

I have many people in this city. Jesus has sent His Holy Spirit to be with us, just as Jesus was with the apostles (John 14, Acts 1:4-8). To empower us to make disciples and reach our community for Christ.

Study Guide Qs:

Q1. Why might it be easier to engage your world with others than alone?

Q2. What are some ways that believers can live the gospel for others to see?

Q3. How would your community be different if more people knew Jesus?

Q4. Imagine Jesus being physically present with you. How might the awareness of His presence impact your experience of sharing the gospel with others?

"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

1. Invite friends or your NG to watch the movie, "Jesus Revolution." Discuss the movie afterwards. What did you like? What was inspiring? How did it make you feel?

2. Here is an insightful article about living God's mission: <https://www.gotquestions.org/missional.html>.

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:
[Pray for God to open doors for you to talk about Jesus with neighbors where you live, work, school, play and worship.](#)

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
3. **The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. **What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.