

Acts of the Holy Spirit - 19
Persevering in Faith and Witness
Acts 18:1-17 - Week of September 24, 2018
Bay Park Life Groups – Participant Guide

Whereas the Gospels tell us what Jesus began to do, Acts is the story of what Jesus continues to do through his Church. The early church in Acts grew because individual believers took joining Jesus' life, community and mission seriously. That's not to say it was easy. In Acts we find that Gospel success is often followed by significant pushback. So much so that even the seemingly fearless Apostle Paul ends up afraid and discouraged. What hope is there when our faith is not appreciated, when the voices of antagonism drown out the voices of reason and respect?

1. Finish one of the following:
 - What I love most about September is . . .
 - If I could relive one day this summer it would be . . .

Read Acts 18:1-8 together

2. *The city of Corinth was at the very narrow bridge of land (only 3 and a half miles wide) that connected the Peloponnese peninsula with the mainland of Greece to the north. It not only was at the center of the north-south trade route, but also of the east-west route. Goods could be brought to a port just to the east of Corinth and transported over land a few miles to a port to the west — this saved a 200 mile journey by ship around the south of the peninsula. As a result, Corinth was a major commercial and finance center. Like many urban centers based on business and wealth — Corinth became famous for a degree of corruption and immorality that was remarkable even for the ancient world. In classical Greek korintheazdo (literally, to “Corintheanize”) became a synonym for fornication. At the center of Corinth was the temple of Aphrodite, which employed thousands of female slave/priestesses who roamed the city as prostitutes.¹*

What challenges did preaching the Gospel in Corinth likely present? How did being a Christian in Corinth compare to being a Christian in Kingston?

3. In verse 8 we read that those who believed were baptized? This is a common occurrence in the early church (cf Acts 2:41; 8:12; 16:15). Believers didn't wait months or years to publically profess their faith, rather it followed on the heels of their coming to faith. What do we learn about baptism from this text? What has your experience been with baptism?

¹ Tim Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the book of Acts*, (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2005) p 161

Read Acts 18:9-10

4. The success of v. 8 seems to clash with Paul's fear in v. 9. On Sunday we noted that Paul was battling the fear of inadequacy (cf 1 Cor 2:1-5) and of cultural climate. In the context of wealthy, sophisticated and sinful Corinth, Paul lost hope that God could use him. He was out of his league. Paul also lost hope that God could protect him. He was not in friendly territory. It's a crisis of hope (*Can God use and protect me?*) not a crisis of faith (*Does God even exist?*). Can you relate to Paul's fears? Where do you tend to lose hope most easily?

5. God's words to Paul contained both admonition (*Do not be afraid, keep on speaking, do not be silent*) and encouragement (*I am with you, I have many people in this city*). How do these admonitions and encouragements apply to you?

Read Acts 18:11-17

6. Paul stayed and as he anticipated, trouble broke out. But God remained true to his promises. What if Paul hadn't stayed, or if he had remained silent? How might that have impacted his faith and life? What encouragement can you draw for yourself from these verses?