

Peter Schweitzer

The Disciple Making Ministry in Ephesus

Acts 19,1-22
Key verse 19,9

"But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus."

We thank the Lord that at the beginning of this new year, He is equipping us spiritually through some special lessons and preparing the work of God in 2021. This past week we renewed our spiritual identity as living stones and as a royal priesthood. We were allowed to come to Jesus, who was rejected by the builders, but whom God made the cornerstone in his eternal redemptive history. God has set us up as a royal priesthood, proclaiming his benefits as he led us from darkness into his wonderful light, and through whom he is spiritually awakening Germany and Europe and setting them up as a priestly nation for the world mission.

Today, through Acts 19, we want to learn about the disciple-making ministry of Apostle Paul in Ephesus. It was an important turning point in mission history. As Paul focused on educating some of Jesus' disciples through daily intensive Bible study and life fellowship, a mighty work of repentance and change occurred. Although Paul stayed in one place, the good news penetrated to all the people in the province of Asia. God's work happens through deep Bible study and making disciples of Jesus. In this new year, let us challenge the work of making disciples through the school of Tyrannus so that Germany and Europe will be spiritually awakened through Bible study and be used as a shepherd nation for the world mission.

1. Discipleship in the school of Tyrannus (1-10)

On his third missionary journey, Paul came to Ephesus and stayed there for about 3 years. While earlier he had pioneered many different cities and made long journeys, this time he de-

voted himself primarily to the work of making disciples. In other words, he helped a small group of disciples study the Word of God intensively so that they would be equipped and a great work of God would be done through them. Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia and an important commercial and cultural center. It was an important port city. World famous was especially the Artemision, the temple of the fertility goddess Artemis, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was a multicultural city and a place where wealth, idolatry and the occult practices flourished. Amazingly, it is in this pagan city full of idolatry that we see a mighty work of God.

Apostle Paul had already been to Ephesus briefly in chapter 18 at the end of his second missionary journey. Since he did not have much time, he left Priscilla and Aquila there as pioneers. God used this godly house church preciously in that they ministered to an eloquent man named Apollos. This man had taught correctly of Jesus, but knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila took him in and interpreted the Word of God to him even more accurately. Through one-on-one Bible study with this house church, Apollos was changed into a fully empowered witness of Jesus who could prove from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. Through them, we see how powerfully God works through one-on-one Bible study and through a godly house church.

Let's look at verses 1 to 7. When Paul arrived in Ephesus at the beginning of his third missionary journey, coming over the highlands, he found some disciples there. Paul must have been glad to meet these eager twelve young men. They always sat in the front row. They were earnest

and endeavored to live a life pleasing to God through repentance. But they still lacked confidence in God's forgiving grace. Like the preacher Apollos, they had only known about John's baptism. But they had never heard of the Holy Spirit. Let's look at verse 4: "Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." Repentance is the first step in our conversion to God. The core of the Gospel is Jesus dying and rising for our sins and baptizing us with the Holy Spirit. This was a whole new message for these disciples, which they had never heard before. As a result, these young men were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them. They became full of joy at the forgiving grace of the Lord Jesus, so that they even spoke in tongues and prophesied. Perhaps they were as excited as the first disciples in John chapter 1, who went around everywhere saying, "We have found the Messiah!" (John 1:41) Personal Bible study conversations always bring about great change and spiritual growth in a person.

Now let's look at how Paul served the work of God in Ephesus. Let's read verse 8 together, "Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God." Just as in many other cities, Paul first went to the synagogue, that is, to the Jews living in the place. For three months Paul taught freely and openly in the synagogue. Again and again he preached the Word of God to them and convinced them of the Kingdom of God. It was very similar to the first message of Jesus: "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15) Paul did his best to plant the hope of the kingdom of God in their hearts. But unfortunately, the result was not as hoped.

Consider verse 9a: "But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way." Although Paul did his best to convince them about Jesus and about the kingdom of God, there were some in the church who remained hardened and would not believe. They had hardened their hearts and decided not to accept Paul's words. It was not doubts of faith that they had, but a very deliberate unbelief and disobedience. Schlachter translates, "But since some hardened themselves and refused to believe, but slandered the way before the multitude..." In order to justify themselves, these

people began to speak evil of the doctrine and slander the way before the multitude. By "way" here is meant Christianity, which is not only a doctrine, but a way of life and a lifestyle. The disciples of Jesus lived differently from the world in that they did not follow the general pursuit of wealth and honor, but laid down their lives for the mission of God, to exercise God's love for lost sinners. But now many fake news spread about Paul and he was slandered. In this way, they acted as enemies of God and exerted bad influence.

What did Paul do in this situation? Let's read verse 9b: "... So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus." Paul did not try to argue and fight with them forever. He could not win them all over. After three months, he made a decision to separate himself from those who kept speaking evil things and spreading slander, and he began a work of his own in the school of Tyrannus. Paul focused on those who had accepted the gospel and were growing in faith with spiritual desire. He took a positive step and created a new spiritual environment where they could study God's Word intensively and thereby grow into the outstanding Bible teachers and global spiritual leaders.

This incident teaches us that we do not need to argue with those who slander the way of Jesus. Where there are those who persist in unbelief and slander God's work, it is sometimes better to separate and focus on the work of making disciples. When the work of making disciples was not recognized among the students, Mother Barry left her sending mission society and established an independent ministry called UBF. She realized that God wanted to use this ministry to spiritually awaken the students in Korea and use them precious as a royal priesthood even for world mission. Paul's prayer concern and goal was to create an environment where God's work could be done mightily through daily Bible study.

Let's read verse 9 together again, "But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus." In what way then did Paul serve the work of God for the next two years?

1. The school of Tyrannus

In order to provide a good spiritual environment for the disciples, Paul moved from the synagogue and now spoke daily in the school of Tyrannus. This school was apparently a school of philosophers or orators belonging to a certain Tyrannus. According to some Greek manuscripts, these conversations took place between 11 o'clock at noon and 4 o'clock in the afternoon. This was just the hottest time of the day, when even today in Greece most businesses close. Probably Paul rented these premises during the time when they were not used by the school itself. In the morning Paul worked as a tentmaker to pay the rent. Then at 11 o'clock he hurried to the school of Tyrannus to meet his Bible students. Every day 5 students means extrapolated to 2 years about 3000 hours of intense fellowship with the Word of God. It is always important to have a set place and time for Bible study in the spiritual environment. Our Tyrannus School also starts at the unusual time. But the early morning prayer with Daily Bread is a source of strength for our faith life, which we should not miss.

2. The intensive Bible Study

What did Paul do during this time? Verse 9 says that he "had discussions" in the school. Paul was talking to his disciples about the Word of God. It was an intensive Bible study through which they could go deep into God's Word and grow into the excellent Bible teachers. The word "talk" is translated as "having discussions" in the NIV. Schlachter translates, "doctrinal conversations." So we must think of this fellowship not as one-sided instruction through frontal teaching or a sermon, but rather as a conversation or discussion about the Word of God in which everyone participated. Paul used the dialectical approach by having the students themselves think about the Word of God, answer questions, and ask questions. He helped them to be more engaged with the Word of God, and to go into the depths of the Word of God themselves. Maybe they had a Bible study first and then wrote their personal testimony on it. Then they prepared factual studies or gave various lectures to learn about Greek church history and also preach the Word of God to the Greeks.

We also experienced how encouraging and edifying it is for the co-workers and next generation when they themselves prepare the Factual Study or give lectures that are very challenging for them. Beginning with one-on-one Bible study, we can also encourage our sheep to

think about the Word of God personally and grow spiritually as a result.

3. Making disciples through common life

Luke emphasizes here that the meetings in Tyrannus' school were daily. So the disciples did not just meet once on the Sabbath or Sunday and then disappear, but they were together every day. It was a fellowship of Bible study on a daily basis. Paul helped them by living together. He did not just teach them theory, but helped them put the Word of God into practice in their practical lives. Later, Paul reminded them in Acts 20:31 that he had not ceased day and night from exhorting each one with tears. He had a close personal fellowship that went beyond the meeting in the school of Tyrannus, where he helped each one according to their prayer requests, even in the middle of the night. Disciple-making often happens through life together, or as one servant of God put it, "The work of God happens in the kitchen." From Luther we have his Table Talks, which were written down by those who lived and ate in his home and who thereby cultivated daily spiritual fellowship. Francke, too, had lunch fellowship with his students, through which, for example, the young Zinzendorff became enthusiastic about world mission. Much of the Gospels do not record Jesus' public ministry, but what he talked about personally with his disciples, e.g., the speeches in the upper room (John 13-17). God works through the common life and establishes a disciple. God works in Sh. Noah through the common life and helps him to seek first the kingdom of God. M. Sarah devotedly serves the community of life in the background by preparing delicious food every Sunday, for example.

4. Through making disciples, Asia Minor was pioneered.

What then was the result when Paul served the disciple-making ministry so intensely through Bible study? Let's read verse 10 together, "This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." On the outside, it looked like Paul was just staying in a small school and talking to a handful of disciples about the Bible. But Luke testifies to us that during this time all the people in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. The Roman province of Asia at that time included the entire eastern Aegean coast and in addition the interior of Asia Minor. How could all these people hear the word of the Lord? It is evident that Paul's disciples not only

studied the Word of God diligently, but passed it on practically everywhere. They could not keep silent about what they had heard and seen. They talked to everyone they met about the Word of God. Verse 10b says that both Jews and Greeks heard the word of the Lord. The city of Colosse is a good example of a church pioneered by Epaphras, a disciple of Paul.

The ministry of UBF has been a ministry of disciple making through intensive Bible study from the very beginning. Dr. Samuel Lee himself researched God's word intensively and educated the disciples through Bible study by helping them to obey God's word. He always helped the leaders intensively so that they could grow into outstanding servants of the word. This disciple-making work among the students changed Korea from a fatalistic third-world country to a priestly nation actively serving the world mission. UBF alone sent 3000 missionaries to over 90 countries.

M. Peter's focus is also always disciple-making through intensive Bible study, namely, one-on-one Bible study, Daily Bread in the morning, messages, factual study, etc. When we experienced a lot of slander last year, He mobilized us to engage more with God's Word, thereby attracting spiritual power. God worked in our Gideon team and Ezekiel team. As they led the baptism Bible study, God especially worked in their hearts through Romans 6:13 so that they could decide to accept Jesus' lordship and live their lives as weapons of righteousness. All the staff were motivated to study the Word of God intensively and prepared profound and gracious lectures and Bible studies. Even our Josiah team was able to share heart-moving messages, and we heard excellent IBS talks from Joshua and Sarah at the end-of-year conference. Our staff gave insightful talks on church history. God worked in the heart of a young man through intensive Bible study. In the past, he had often been fickle, living only an outward life of faith. But especially in the time of temptation, he was allowed to become strong through Bible study, so that he decided to love God with all his heart, soul and strength and to hold on to God's calling. Thus, he could even be used as a source of blessing for our next generation.

God's word from Hebrews 5:8 helped a young man who used to suffer from a tic problem that he may come out of the self-centered life, learn the obedience of faith, and now glorify God through his high school graduation.

Normally, we think that a great work of God could be recognized by the number of members or worship participants. But just the crisis time of the pandemic shows that it does not depend on big numbers. What matters is the quality of a Bible teacher. What matters is to raise up a person as an outstanding Bible teacher who is capable of teaching others as well, so that God's work can continue.

God's work is done by making disciples through intensive Bible study. In the past, I did not want to study God's word. But when I heard only the voice of the world, I became a cold-hearted and hurtful egoist who deserved only God's punishment. The intensive Bible study, however, opened my spiritual eyes to know the love of God and to become healthy. It gave me life direction and set me up as a Bible teacher for the students of this generation. Instead of just dealing with computers, I may focus on the study of God's word, which is to search and obey the word of God and teach commandments and judgments (Ezra 7:10).

Let us give our hearts to intensive Bible study and disciple-making daily. GLEF is a program of intensive Bible study for our next generation through which they grow to be disciples of Jesus and teachers of the Bible. We are also looking forward and excited for the first leadership conference in this new year with intensive Bible study program.

2. Paul's Vision (11-22)

Let us now consider the mighty effects of the work of making disciples in Ephesus. Verse 11 says, "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul," Apostle Paul possessed spiritual authority so that many deeds were done by his hands. The evil spirits trembled before him and even before his garments, when they only heard that they had been worn by Paul. In contrast, there were some comedians who were sons of a Jewish high priest. They wanted to excel as spirit charmers and used the name of Jesus to do so. They said, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Perhaps they thought that the name of Jesus was some kind of incantation. In any case, the evil spirit was not impressed. He replied, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the person in whom the evil spirit was pounced on them and beat them bloody so that they fled the house naked and wounded. It

was shameful for the would-be conjurers. But all who heard of it were struck with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was exalted.

In verses 18 to 20, we learn about a powerful repentance movement in Ephesus. Let's read verse 18: "Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds." It was a mighty work of repentance that these people now confessed their sins and repented of them. This also affected some who had formerly practiced sorcery. Sorcery is an occult pursuit that puts people under its spell so that they can hardly get out of it. This was widespread in Ephesus. But through the Word of God, these people repented and decided to follow Jesus. They became free from their old bondages and publicly burned their magic books, which were estimated to be worth the equivalent of 3 million euros. Let's look at verse 20: "In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power." God's word has great power to change.

It is God's changing work that a young man was allowed to burn his dream of becoming a successful businessman and decided he would much rather suffer with God's people by living as a pioneer for a college. It is God's mighty work that another young man was allowed to burn his ticket for the unbound adventure journey after high school graduation and decided to much rather buy a ticket for spiritual training and grow up as a shepherd. Let us burn all false bondage to this world, to pleasure and to the Internet, and give our hearts to Bible study, being eager for the sensible louder milk.

Now consider verse 21: "After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." Paul first wanted to collect an offering from the Gentile Christians to support the church in Jerusalem. After that, he also wanted to see Rome. Rome was the capital of the world at that time. Actually, one could not even think of evangelizing this city. But Paul had received the vision through the mighty work of God in Ephesus that even the Gentile city of Rome could be conquered through the work of making disciples.

The vision for the Rome mission was not a fiction or slogan. Paul prayed with this vision and God led it that he was brought to Rome as a prisoner and was able to serve the one-to-one

bible study ministry in prison. An important church was established in Rome and eventually from Rome the whole Roman Empire was reached with the gospel through Roman roads. Paul shared this vision with his co-workers. So we see that Priscilla and Aquila came to Rome before Paul and a church gathered in their home.

We learn here to serve the work of God with the vision of God. Where a people have no vision, they become wild and desolate (Prov 29:18). But when a person or a church has the vision of God, then it can be used as an influential church. God has given us the vision that through our disciple-making ministry and one-on-one Bible study, Germany and Europe will be spiritually awakened and used as a Holy nation for world mission. One person being needed as a Bible teacher is crucial. Based on this, we may form 10,000 one-on-one Bible study teams and open up all the universities in Europe. We have already experienced God's work through one-on-one Bible study in our shepherds and in the next generation who have been changed spiritually. Now we may also see God's vision to establish three bases for the M mission because the harvest fields are also ripe for harvest there.

The vision comes from the work of God. Making disciples through one-on-one Bible study changes first a person, a campus, and then a whole nation. In this way, the One-to-one Bible Study ministry can spread from Bonn to Europe and also into the whole world.

God's work is done through disciple making and intensive Bible study. Let us set our hearts on studying the Word of God this year. God bless us to focus on the study of the Word of God despite the pandemic and to serve the disciple-making work so that Germany and Europe can be spiritually awakened and used as a shepherd nation for world mission.