

Balancing Boldness & Wisdom

Acts 18-19

Icebreaker: *Where is one place you have always wanted to travel to?*

Upon leaving Athens Paul travels throughout Greece and Turkey spreading the message of the Gospel. He travels to three places that he later writes letters back to—Corinth (18:1), Ephesus (18:19), and Galatia (18:23). In Acts 19 Paul returns to Ephesus to spread the Gospel.

Acts 19:1-7

What did Paul ask if they had received?

- The Holy Spirit

What was their answer?

- They had not even heard of the Holy Spirit. They had only had John's baptism.

Paul teaches them that John's baptism pointed to something greater—the one coming after him, that is Jesus. John's baptism was to ready people for Jesus. Jesus' baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit makes us a new creation.

Why is it important to recognize that we receive the Holy Spirit when we are baptized?

- We are not just getting wet—there really is something important happening between ourselves and God.
- God is interested in us enough to be present with us each and every day of our lives.

Acts 19:8-17

Through miraculous signs and wonders God made it known to the people in Ephesus that Paul's message was true. Hearing that people in Ephesus had evil spirits, it is no wonder that when Paul later wrote back to them, maybe even to some of those he had healed, he said the following—**Ephesians 2:1-3**.

As we see with the evil spirits and the sons of Sceva, Ephesus was a place that was famous for magic and calling on the name of various gods and spirits for power. In **Ephesians 1:19-22** Paul reminds them of just how powerful and authoritative Christ is.

What comfort do you find in being reminded that Christ is more powerful than anything the world or even Satan himself can throw at you?

Acts 19:18-22

It has often been said that secrets have a lot of power. They can break down marriages and families. They can also hinder our relationship with God. Notice that the people of Ephesus exposed their secret and shameful ways and burned the bridges to the past godlessness by destroying what had kept them from relying on God's power.

How much boldness and wisdom did it take to rid their lives of magic?

We are often asked to sacrifice for the kingdom. Monetary values has little to do with what we choose to sacrifice. Instead, we have to decide to put behind us anything that can hinder our relationship with God.

Hebrews 12:1-3

What have you had to throw off that you knew had kept your relationship with God from being all that it could be?

What focal point does Hebrews say we fix our eyes on in order to run our race better?

- Jesus who is the author and perfecter of our faith. He has blazed the trail ahead of us so that we can follow in his steps.

Why is it hard to follow Jesus if your eyes are fixed on something else?

When we decide to turn from sin and follow God, Satan is usually right there to oppose it. Satan had a stranglehold on the hearts of the people of Ephesus for so long he wasn't going to go down without a fight.

Acts 19:23-34

Why does this group of men reject the message of Jesus?

- They are threatened financially—They can see that their industry will have hard times financially if people start believing Artemis is not a real “god.”
- They are threatened religiously—They also feel like Artemis will lose honor if people turn to Jesus.
- They are bold in their approach but their boldness is not balanced by wisdom about what was true—that Artemis was fake and Jesus Christ is real.

What excuses do people today make for not believing in Jesus?

Acts 19:37-20:1

The story ends with the crowd dispersed and Paul on his way to Macedonia. We see from this ending that boldness takes wisdom. Paul could have gone out there to defend himself. He probably could have spoken more eloquent and convincing words than this city clerk did. On the council of his friends (19:31) he decided to stay back and not face the crowd.

How do you know when it is appropriate to be bold and take risks and when to take a back seat and wait?

- It takes prayer and a healthy relationship with God to make those decisions.

The Sons of Sceva earlier in the chapter had boldness without wisdom and what happened to them?

- They were beaten by a man with an evil spirit.

Developing the kind of relationship with God that knows when to be bold and when to refrain takes time and experience. It also takes a tremendous amount of trust.

Application

What areas of your life could use to take more risks for Christ?

What areas of your life could use more wisdom?