

**Go On Speaking and Do Not Be Silent**

Acts 18-19

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Overview: Paul's travels to different cities enabled him to come into contact with people who were at various stages in their journey with the Lord. His encounter with Aquila and Priscilla resulted in a deep friendship that served to complement Paul's ministry of discipling believers. This partnership, along with that of Crispus and other Corinthians, was certainly a source of personal support for Paul as he faced rejection by many of the Jews for preaching the gospel. Paul's encounter with the disciples in Ephesus revealed their need to be better informed about Jesus, leading to a remarkable display of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Despite the wonderful work of God in Paul's ministry, he still faced difficulties from those who tried to mimic his work and from those who attempted to stop his work altogether. Luke thus presents the highs and the lows of Christian ministry over time, with certain implications for us today.

01. Engaging mature Christians with gospel interactions can be rewarding if we build one another up in the Lord, so we should treasure such friendships as gifts from God to His church.

02. Engaging non-Christians with gospel invitations can be discouraging if we see few conversions, so we should never lose sight of God's purposes as the motivation for our faithfulness.

03. Engaging new Christians with gospel expectations can be dissatisfying if we measure their growth by our standards, so we should always consider how God is at work in their lives.

04. Engaging culture with gospel implications can be disturbing if we seek true repentance, so we should not fear the consequences when God's goodness threatens Satan's strongholds.

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1. Given the troubles that Paul faced throughout his ministry (arrests, false accusations, lack of response to his evangelistic attempts, etc.), how significant were the friendships he had with people like Aquila and Priscilla? How important are such relationships for church members and leaders today?

2. How would you assess Paul's frustration toward the Jews who rejected his gospel invitations (verse 6)? Why is it important for us to recognize that leaders may need to move on from current ministries in order to be more effective for the Lord? Why is it also important for leaders to recognize that ministry doesn't always produce immediately tangible results?

3. What accounts for the fact that Apollos and the disciples in Ephesus were aware of the baptism of John but knew little to nothing of the work of Jesus? In what ways do these examples set forth a standard of discipleship that centers on Christ as the source of our righteousness, wisdom, and sanctification? What happens when discipleship is reduced to nothing more than an expectation of moral improvement?

4. References to the speaking in tongues, prophesying, and healings are all prominent in Acts 19:6, 11-12. Some Christian groups highlight these events as normative for the church today. What factors should we consider in the book of Acts when determining whether or not such events should occur today? [Hint: note how rare these instances are and when they occur in Luke's narrative, namely, as significant groups encounter the gospel for the first time in the presence of an apostle.]

5. What are gospel implications in relation to cultural norms? In other words, how does the gospel challenge a given culture? Why is it important for Christians to be counter-cultural rather than culture-conformists? How can Christians implement the gospel in a culture without forcing it on others? [Another hint: notice how the work of the gospel transforms hearts first].

For Further Reading: Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*. InterVarsity Press, 2000; 20th Anniversary Edition.

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