

Aim of lesson

To see how believing things which are true or things which are false affects what we do and what sort of people we become.

Bible background

Acts 18:18-28; Acts 19.

Outline of lesson

Travels

You may like to introduce the lesson by considering the movements made in Acts 18:18-28 and 19:1. It will help to clarify what is happening if you give members of your class markers or flags labelled Paul, Aquila, Priscilla and Apollos. You could include a flag for the church at Jerusalem and one for the church at Antioch. Ask each student to hold their flag on the large map. Paul, Aquila and Priscilla start at Corinth. Apollos could start in Alexandria. The flags can be moved as appropriate as you read Acts 18:18-28 and 19:1. Note that at Acts 18:22 Paul has returned to Antioch, his starting place, and so has completed his second missionary journey. This part of the lesson is optional, but may be useful in reminding the class of Paul's journeys, since the last two lessons have been looking at one of his letters.

At Ephesus

Give each member of your class one of the following sections of chapter 19 to discover some of the things that happened at Ephesus: v1-7, v8-10, v11-12, v13-17, v18-20. Have each read their own section and consider which of the pictures on the worksheet relate to their section. Have each member report back to the class on what they have read and what their illustration shows. The class can label their illustrations as they are introduced.

Go through the five sections and illustrations in turn. Discuss what is true or false in each event. The following are suggestions; your class may well find others.

The true things:

- the importance of being baptised into Jesus;
- the importance of preaching about Jesus even when there is opposition,
- the power of God to heal.

The false things:

- the false healers who thought the name of Jesus was just a magic word,
- the magic spells and sorcery in the books that were burnt.

You may like to encourage the class to think about other false things in this area, e.g. horoscopes, fortune tellers, etc. There is room to write a short sentence under each question.

Riot

Read together Acts 19:23-41. The words of Demetrius, the crowd and the City Clerk could be read by different members of the class. In order to discuss the events it may be helpful to ask the class what each of the characters was thinking. Have them consider the motives of Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen, of the disciples and of Paul.

Ask the class to write on the worksheet opposite the last illustration what was false in this situation. The answer is intended to be 'the worship of idols' though there may be others.

What a difference a faith makes

Ask them to list the true and false things they have found in the boxes at the end of the worksheet. Discuss with the class the way belief in these things changes a person. For example, if you believe in baptism into Christ, you will be baptised. This means you will confess your sins and accept God's forgiveness. This should make you a humbler and more forgiving person too. Belief in the importance of preaching about Jesus will mean that you have to get to know Jesus well -- both his actions and his teaching. It will encourage you to live by the standards you preach. If you believe in the absolute power of God then you are not afraid of what anyone else can do. Similarly, belief in false things can change you. Belief in false healers, sorcery and magic makes people afraid and superstitious. You may like to have the class assess the character of Demetrius -- his greed and self interest and his attempt to make trouble and possibly kill Paul. This can be considered as some of the characteristics that come from worshipping idols. You may like to look up the words in Isaiah 41:21-24, or 44:9-11 to see God's valuation of those who worship idols. Look together at Psalm 115:2-8 and consider the idea suggested in verse 8 that we become like what we worship.

Jesus warns us particularly about worshipping Mammon -- money. Ask the class what people become like if they worship money. Is this a danger for your class?

The picture in the middle is to remind the class that you cannot stay sitting on the fence all your life. You have to choose what is true or what is false.

Digging deeper

Ephesus

In this section the students consider the wealth of the city of Ephesus in contrast to true riches. Some photographs of Ephesus now might be useful.

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class to consider during the week any challenges to worship money that they meet in attitudes at school or on television or in books. Discuss these challenges when you meet next week.

Prayer

You may like to have the class consider what Paul might have prayed for the people of Ephesus as he was about to leave

Other suggestions for activities

- The riot could be dramatised as a recorded play.
- The class could invent an acrostic on the words EPHESUS using the events that happened there, such as:
 - E**ach disciple of John was re-baptised into Jesus.
 - P**aul preached here for two years.
 - H**andkerchiefs from Paul were taken to heal the sick.
 - E**veryone in Asia heard the word of the Lord.
 - S**even sons of Sceva tried to heal using the name of Jesus.
 - U**ntrue magic books were burnt.
 - S**ilversmiths led a riot