

STUDY 6 || *ACTS 19 & EPHESIANS*

# GOSPEL POWER

Sometimes we think it would be great to have a bit more ‘spiritual power’... power to heal, power to prosper, power to make life just how we want it to be. But Paul is more likely to be thinking of the need for the kind of long term spiritual power that sustains us and keeps us going! Eg “Out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit” (Eph 3:16).

Which kind of ‘spiritual power’ would you prefer, and why?



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## BAPTISTS GET SAVED

### *John the Baptist in Acts*

In some ways, John the Baptist is a shadowy figure. And yet he features prominently in all the gospels, and is mentioned surprisingly often in Acts. You'll find John and his 'water baptism of repentance' mentioned in Acts 1:5, 1:22, 10:37, 11:16, 13:24-25, 18:25, and 19:3-4. The effects of John's pre-Jesus ministry had clearly spread far and wide. In fact, there seemed to be keen clusters of his followers in many of the places visited by Paul and the other apostles. Typically, they were very keen to hear about Jesus, because John - at least in his later ministry - clearly pointed to Jesus as the one who would bring the much better 'baptism of the Spirit.' In the words of Paul in Pisidian Antioch, *"As John was completing his work, he said: 'Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.'* (Acts 13:25) Former disciples of John the Baptist are among the most receptive hearers of the good news of Jesus and the Spirit!

### Read Acts 19:1-7

1. What's the real problem with the twelve men Paul meets? What is Paul's primary concern for them? How is the problem solved?
2. Who does Paul say they need to believe in to receive the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit?'
3. Do you know people whose understanding is true but incomplete? How can we reach them with the good news of Jesus?

Some churches teach from this passage that salvation comes in two steps - faith in Jesus, followed by a later blessing from the Spirit. But these 'disciples' have not yet believed in Jesus. Through Paul's preaching they came to believe in Jesus, and then received the Spirit as a mark of their faith - just as we do. John baptised with water - but Jesus baptises with the Holy Spirit. The fact that they speak in tongues is a visible sign at this key point in the story.

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## GHOSTBUSTERS GET BUSTED

### Read Acts 19:8-12

Remarkably *all* the Jews and Greeks in Asia have now heard the Word of the Lord - though they haven't necessarily agreed with it! Clearly, Paul is doing a great job of spreading the news that the one who died for sin is King.

4. Should the miracles in verses 11 and 12 be expected as normal Christian experience? Why or why not? (There's one key word in these verses that gives the answer!)

**Read Acts 19:13-20**

5. What's the motive of the Jews who are in the business of driving out demons? Why is messing around with such 'spirituality' dangerous?

What is the positive gospel impact as a result?

6. What stands out about their repentance? How does that challenge you/us when it comes to dealing with the God-substitutes that have a grip on our hearts?

"The power of the Spirit is a power to transform lives through the gospel, and not a power to use for our own benefit." Have you seen the opposite idea at work?

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## THE ASIAN ECONOMIC CRISIS

**Read Acts 19:21-41**

7. What causes the riot in Ephesus? Is Demetrius overstating the impact of Paul's ministry? (verses 26-27) What are Demetrius and his fellow idol makers most concerned about?

If there was a mass turning to Jesus in Brisbane what aspects of the economy would be most affected?

In verses 37-40 it's important to notice once again that Christianity is declared legal, while rioting against Christians is not! This will be important to note when the time comes for Paul to defend himself in Rome.

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## STRATEGIC MEMO

Everywhere you look in these chapters of Acts, it seems there's someone wanting to benefit or prosper from the power of the Spirit. That idea is still around today. Later, Paul sends a letter to the church in Ephesus to make very clear to them what God's power is really all about.

8. Paul prays that the Christians in Ephesus will know "his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Eph 1:18-19) What does God's power do in us, and for what purpose? (Eph 3:16-19)
9. What would it look like to pray for that kind of spiritual power? What's scary and exciting about that?