



## THE GOSPEL: THIS AIN'T MAGIC. IT'S JESUS!

### Open it

1. Describe a magic trick or card trick that you've seen that totally blew your mind!

### Daily devotions

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Acts 19:1-22

2. How would you summarize this passage? What are some of the key things that happened?
3. What stood out to you in this passage?
4. What did you learn about God from this passage?
5. What questions do you have after reading this passage?

## Day 2

### TODAY'S THEME: GETTING THE CONTEXT

#### Read Acts 19:1

Ephesus was one of the most influential cities in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Western Turkey). While it wasn't the capital city of the province, it was the "most populous city of the most prosperous and populated province in the empire."<sup>1</sup>

Ephesus was also practically the capital of ancient magic, with many people there who practiced "magic" by manipulating evil spirits for their own benefit.

Despite all of that, there were many people there who believed, but had not yet received the Holy Spirit because they had not placed their trust in Jesus. They had heard John the Baptist's message that a greater person was coming after him, but they apparently had not yet heard about Jesus, at least not as the Savior of the world!

There was a lot of work that needed to be done in this city. Paul would end up spending about three years there teaching about Jesus

**6. How can culture influence the way people look at God and respond to the message about Jesus?**

**7. What components from our culture today might act as a hindrance for people to respond to the gospel?**

**I HAVE A QUESTION!** ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

**PRAYER GUIDE** ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- That Christians, even yourself, won't become so consumed with our culture that we miss out on the joy of having a relationship with Jesus!

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<sup>1</sup> *The IVP Bible Background Commentary — New Testament*. Craig s. Keener. Pg 382

## Day 3

### TODAY'S THEME: BAPTISM

#### Read Acts 19:1–10

Baptism is a practice we have continued in the Church even today. Maybe you have even been baptized. But even if you haven't, I am sure that you have at least witnessed someone else being baptized. What in the world is baptism? How could there be a baptism in John? What does that even mean?

Well, to the people living in the days when Paul was in Ephesus, baptism was a pretty big deal. People were baptized in many different names back then. If you were baptized in someone's name, you identified yourself as a follower of that person. So to be baptized in Jesus' name would identify you as a follower of Jesus Christ!

But the Jews would have recognized baptism as a practice that was reserved for non-Jews to do when they converted to Judaism. When Paul speaks of a baptism in Jesus' name, it levels the playing field. The Jews would have understood it to mean that they must therefore convert to "the Way" or Christianity in order to be saved!

But the important thing to remember about baptism is that it does not save you! You are saved only through faith in Jesus Christ, not by any works you can do (Ephesians 2:8-9). Your salvation happens internally, and baptism is just symbolic of what happened in your heart. It's an external expression of an internal reality.

**8. In what ways is baptism symbolic of what has already happened in our lives if we have been saved from our sins?**

**9. Have you been baptized? If yes, what made you want to be baptized? Talk about how you felt when you were baptized. If no, what is keeping you from being baptized?**

**I HAVE A QUESTION!** ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

**PRAYER GUIDE** ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- If you have not been baptized, pray that God might give you the courage to be baptized.
- Thank the Lord for what baptism symbolizes in your life and your relationship with Him!

## Day 4

### TODAY'S THEME: NO MANIPULATING JESUS

Read Acts 19:11–17

Ephesus was a center for ancient magic and meddling with evil spirits. Even many Jews were known as “magical exorcists” in this city. Recordings about ancient magic indicate that the “magicians” believed that they could manipulate higher spirits to cast out lesser spirits if they called out to their name or said all the right things. Apparently Sceva and his sons fell under this category as well. After witnessing Paul cast out many evil spirits from people in the city, they decided that this “Jesus” must be a pretty powerful spirit. So they thought they’d give it a shot!

What happened next sounds like it might have come straight out of one the newest horror movie plots in theatres.

But the reality is that you can’t manipulate Jesus’ name or his power for your own benefit. Casting out evil spirits wasn’t a matter of just spurring out the name “Jesus” and all was well. Trying to manipulate Jesus only turns out poorly for you in the end. I mean, you wouldn’t want to flee “naked and wounded” like the sons of Sceva would you?!

**10. What do you believe to be true about evil spirits?**

**11. You don’t see many, if any, exorcisms in our culture today unless you’re watching the latest horror movies. What are some ways that people may try to manipulate Jesus’ name and power today?**

**I HAVE A QUESTION!** ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

**PRAYER GUIDE** ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- God would continue to create in you a pure heart.
- Praise God that He has power and authority over evil spirits.

## Day 5

### TODAY'S THEME: REPENTANCE

#### Read Acts 19:18–20

These verses show one of the greatest pictures of what it means to repent! To repent literally means to change your mind about something, which when talking about faith in Christ, would mean to change your mind about your sins, your self, and your Savior. In regard to sin, you agree that your sin is wrong and a violation against the very nature of God; in regard to your self, there is no amount of good works that you can do to save yourself; and in regard to your Savior, Jesus is the only true Messiah who can rescue you from your sin through His death, burial, and resurrection.

While repentance means to change your mind, true repentance will also lead to a change of actions because as you've changed your mind about your sins it ought to lead you to take different actions—in agreement with God's will! We see this with these people in Ephesus who repented (changed their mind) about Jesus and participating in their magical exorcisms, and they confessed and divulged their practices and “spells,” which to them was, in a way, giving up their “powers.” They even went to the point of burning their books! Now that is turning from your sinfulness!

God doesn't call us to partially repent, but to fully repent and forsake our sinful lives and follow Him in righteousness!

#### 12. Why would it be impossible for someone to be a Christian and have never repented?

#### 13. Is there anything you need to repent of today? Not just something to confess, but something to totally leave behind in your life! What steps can you take to put that struggle behind you?

**I HAVE A QUESTION!** ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

**PRAYER GUIDE** ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Read Psalm 139:23–24. Let this be your prayer today!

Note: This study guide was written by Pastors Tim Badal, Mario Arindaeng, and Jeremy Anderson, Village Bible Church. [www.villagebible.church](http://www.villagebible.church)