

Acts 19:1-20 (ESV)

¹ And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.

Found some disciples – in other words – the Jesus message was getting out there.

² And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

Never heard of the Holy Spirit. That doesn't surprise me. Quite often when people become Christians today hearing about the Holy Spirit is a bit of a spin out. It is another part of the Jesus message or the gospel that is rarely talked about in modern society and in fact many churches back away from talking about the Holy Spirit because it causes some dissention. So what is actually WHO is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God. Just like God the Father and Jesus. Too often we separate them into three identities. The easiest way to describe the unity is they are one person with three characteristics.

There are many ways to describe the unity of God or what theology calls the Trinity. Augustine used a number of different examples. You can read his “De trinitate” some time if you like. Others use the examples of God being like water – water can be ice, liquid or steam. Others look at the Holy Spirit as a man – Father, son and brother.

Yet all these examples fall short and really I cannot give you a perfect understanding of the Holy Spirit either. That is because we each react to the relationship with God and thus the Holy Spirit differently.

One way of looking at the issue is to understand that the Holy Spirit is the part of God that has a direct relationship with our lives. It is the part of God that is accessible to us all the time.

So logically, our initial understanding of how the Holy Spirit interacts with our lives is minimal and my hope is that our understanding and interaction with the Holy Spirit develops. It really is part of the journey and process of becoming a mature Christian.

Anyway we need to move on, Although this is a concept that we each need to spend time working through.

³ And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John's baptism.”

⁴ And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.”

So some Baptism isn't good enough? Well here we are talking about Baptism that isn't necessarily focused on Jesus. (Story of Mahesh – Baptised as a Hindu in the Ganges) That is why when we do Baptisms as Baptists you will hear the line: I baptise you in the name of the Father, son and Holy Spirit. – That statement focuses and identifies who our baptism is in Honour of.

Notice that when they found out that their baptism wasn't representative of the relationship to Jesus – they rectified the situation – they got Baptised.

⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The process was done.

It is the next verse that creates some issue for some people.

⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

Why did this happen? Should we expect it to happen when someone is baptised?

One thing we notice from reading the book of Acts is that the Holy Spirit works in different ways in people's lives.

Acts 2:41 (ESV)

⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Notice no mention of extra spiritual activity.

Acts 9:18-19 (ESV)

¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;

¹⁹ and taking food, he was strengthened.

Again no mention.

Acts 16:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Same again.

BUT

⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

So the assumption is that sometimes it happened and sometimes it didn't. The assumption is that **God works differently in different people and within different situations.**

It has been said that God works in an appropriate fashion in each person's lives to develop them into His disciples.

Ask yourself, how does God work within me that is different from others.

Conversions, discipleship, development – each person is different and God, somehow, manages it all.

I love the next verse:

⁷ There were about twelve men in all.

It is just the way Luke the author gives us the context and the feeling of what was happening. There are 12 guys here all got baptised, all had developing relationships with Jesus.

In the next part of the passage we see Paul change tact.

What he has been doing is discipling those guys who were baptised. Now he goes back to his main task of evangelism.

Why is this significant?

It shows that ministry is multifaceted. There is discipling and there is evangelism, or as has been out theme this year there is Ministry and there is mission, you can't isolate the different aspects of ministry.

Look at what Paul goes to.

⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

He goes into a hostile environment and does his stuff.

Notice the wording

1. Boldly
2. Reasoning
3. Persuading

Are these three words we use to describe our concept of mission?

Are these three words that describe our ministries?

Are these three words that describe how we interface with our families about Jesus?

Probably not is the answer.

⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.

Notice here that some don't get it. They don't get it to a point of trying to discredit the Jesus message. So Paul backs away. Leaves them to it. And goes somewhere else.

Now I had assumed that this hall of Tyrannus was a pagan temple or something, actually I remember being told that it was by a preacher when I was younger. BUT

Tyrannus was a rich bloke that owned a lecture hall. So what happens here is Paul leaves the synagogue and the Jewish people and goes to a lecture hall – a place designed to here different ideas and designed to hear debate.

Cool hey, Paul puts himself in a position to be in debate with the locals. Not only that, he keeps on at it.

¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

The message was said long enough so that the whole area heard about it.