**Unstoppable: Surprised?**

Acts 18:24-19:20

Small Groups Discussion

**Warm-up Discussion**: Andy Boutcher spoke this week at TVC. He emphasized how the people in this week’s section of Acts encountered surprising events. They learned, “Something that they found surprising was part of God’s plan all along.” At the outset of the message, Andy shared about a story in his extended family, wherein a surprising event changed the direction of one family’s life.

* **Discuss** (have everyone answer): Has there been any unexpected event in your life, which brought about a change of direction?

**Pray**: Leaders, ask for God’s Spirit to lead your study and discussion of his word, that you may all be built up in Christ.

**Scripture Background**: In the previous week’s passage, the Apostle Paul spent over a year and a half spreading the good news of Jesus in the city of Corinth, with great success. At the end of the story, we saw him travel back to Syrian Antioch, his home base, with a brief and successful stop in Ephesus, the Roman provincial capital of Asia. He gave a report in Antioch on how his second missionary journey had gone, and then quickly set out for a third missionary journey. Today’s story can be broken down into three scenes.

Read Scene 1, Acts 18:24-28, then discuss the following.

1. In v. 24-25, what do we learn about Apollos? Name all the characteristics that we see about him in these verses.
   1. Luke says that while Apollos was well educated, and a gifted speaker, “He knew only the baptism of John [the Baptist].” Andy summarized this by saying that John the Baptist’s ministry was the culmination of the Old Testament story, which taught that people turn away from God. John the Baptist had called people to repent—to turn back to God—in preparation for the Savior that God was about the send. Apollos was well acquainted with this message, but had not personally entered into a relationship with Jesus, whom John had foretold.
2. What happens to put Apollos on the right course?
   1. Leaders: Be sure to bring out that two people (Aquila and Priscilla) noticed Apollos, took an interest in him, invited him into their home, and helped him to understand the gospel. This was a crucial, surprising turning point for Apollos.
   2. What fruit results from Aquila and Priscilla’s investment in him? (See vv. 27-28).
      1. Note: Achaia is the region where Corinth and Athens are located—the two cities where Paul has recently established Christian congregations.
      2. Leaders: It seems that Apollos plays a significant role in helping the new believers there to grow in maturity. (If you have time, read 1 Corinthians 3:1-6, to see more about Apollos’ ministry in Corinth.)
   3. Discuss: Has anyone played this role in your life, which Aquila and Priscilla did for Apollos? Is there anyone who might benefit from your inviting them into your life, so that you can mentor them with regard to life with Jesus?

Read Scene 2, Acts 19:1-12, then discuss the following.

1. When Paul returns to Ephesus, he learns that there are people there who were similar to Apollos—they worshipped God, and knew the teaching of John the Baptist, but they had not entered into relationship with Jesus.
   1. What was the major facet missing from the lives of these people in vv. 1-7? (The Holy Spirit).
   2. What immediate expressions of the Holy Spirit’s presence come about in the lives of these believers? (v. 6).
   3. While these gifts may seem extreme, they are often a part of the experience of believers (see 1 Corinthians 12-14). Either way, if we have not opened our lives to the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are lacking the joy and power that Jesus offers for life. In what ways have you experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life? Are there areas of life where you need to become more open to the Spirit’s power?
2. What surprises happen for Paul in vv. 8-10? (Leaders: he gets kicked out of the synagogue again, but his resulting ministry in a lecture hall bears great fruit).
   1. What effect did Paul’s ministry in Ephesus have on the province of Asia? (See v. 10).
   2. What do you think of this, in light of Paul’s initial efforts to enter Asia, and the rejection he experienced? (See Acts 16:6-10). It seems that God has taken a major disappointment, and in his sovereign timing, worked out a way for the good news to go into Asia with great success.
   3. Have you seen God use surprises—even disappointments—in your life, to further the mission of Jesus?

Read Scene 3, Acts 19:13-20.

1. What is your initial reaction to this scene involving evil spirits and a failed exorcism?
   1. Background: It seems that the sons of Sceva, like previous people in today’s passage, haven’t entered into a life-giving relationship with Jesus. They are “name-dropping,” as Andy said—attempting to use the name of Jesus for their own gain, without knowing him personally.
2. In what way does this encounter with the supernatural have an effect on the people of Ephesus? What are the tangible results? See vv. 17-20.
   1. Have you ever experienced something that was clearly supernatural?
   2. Are there areas where your experience with Jesus should produce confession, or even giving something up, like these people in Ephesus did?
   3. Re-read Acts 1:8, which summarizes the mission of Jesus. Now note where that mission stands as of 19:20. What summary does Luke give here? What has brought this about?
3. Andy made the point that when we operate in life without welcoming the presence of the Spirit of Jesus, we lack the power to overcome evil (whether in supernatural forms, or “normal” struggles with sin). Are there areas where you need people to pray for you, so that you might receive the Spirit’s power to overcome evil or sin?

**Pray**: Spend time praying for one another, especially in the areas mentioned above, where the Spirit’s power is needed.