



# LIFE Group Discussion Guide

January 18, 2026

**Acts 19:21-41**

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## CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

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## OPENING

Acts 19 shows what happens when Jesus changes not just people's hearts, but entire communities. In Ephesus, people's lives were being transformed so much that the city's culture and economy started shaking. Imagine a city built around the worship of a famous goddess, Artemis. People's money, pride, and identity were tied up in her temple. When the gospel came, it challenged everything they had believed and depended on.

This reminds us that following Jesus isn't always easy. Sometimes it shakes up our comfort, our routines, or even the way our friends and family see us. But disruption isn't bad—it's a sign that Jesus is at work.

Ask yourself this week:

- **Where is Jesus shaking things up in my life?**
- **What might I need to let go of so He can be the most important thing?**

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## **SCRIPTURE**

### **Acts 19:21–41**

Ask volunteers to read aloud. Stop occasionally to check understanding or highlight key moments.

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## **BACKGROUND SUMMARY**

- Paul is following God's plan to eventually go to Jerusalem and Rome.
- The gospel is growing in Ephesus and changing lives.
- A silversmith, Demetrius, gets upset because his idol-making business is losing money.
- A huge crowd forms, causing chaos, but the town clerk calms them down.
- This story shows that when people follow Jesus, it can challenge what's normal in culture.

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## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

### **What caught your attention in this story?**

*Answers:* Big crowd, city full of confusion, courage of disciples, town clerk stopping the riot.

### **How would you describe the vibe in Ephesus during the riot?**

*Answers:* Chaotic, loud, emotional, confusing.

### **Why did Demetrius and the other craftsmen get so upset?**

*Answers:* Money loss, fear of losing influence, scared for their culture/tradition.

### **Why did the gospel threaten the idol-makers' business?**

*Answers:* People stopped buying idols because they followed Jesus; repentance changes behavior.

### **What does this tell us about the gospel's power in Ephesus?**

*Answers:* It was transforming lives visibly, impacting the economy, noticeable to everyone.

### **How does this show that following Jesus can go against culture or trends?**

*Answers:* Challenges traditions, disrupts norms, can make you stand out or face pushback.

### **What are some modern "idols" teens might struggle with today?**

*Answers:* Phones/social media, popularity, money, comfort, gaming, sports, peer approval.

### **Have you ever felt pressure for following Jesus?**

*Answers:* Teasing, exclusion, losing friends, awkward moments, having to make tough choices.

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## **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

### **What might Jesus be asking you to surrender or change in your life?**

*Answers:* Habits, priorities, time, entertainment, attitudes, pride.

### **If the gospel grew in your school or neighborhood, what might change?**

*Answers:* Friendships, bullying, honesty, helping others, generosity, attitudes toward authority.

### **How can your group help each other stay strong when following Jesus is hard?**

*Answers:* Prayer partners, encouraging messages, accountability, celebrating wins, reminding each other of God's promises.

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## **PRAYER FOCUS**

### **Pray for:**

- **Courage to Let Go of Idols** — Ask God to help you give up anything competing with Him.
- **Faith When Following Jesus is Hard** — Pray for strength when it's tough to do the right thing.
- **Change in Our Community** — Pray that your school, friends, and neighborhood experience God's love.
- **Wisdom in a Confusing World** — Ask God to help you make good choices.
- **Boldness to Live for Jesus** — Pray to stand up for Him even when it's unpopular.
- **For Our Worship Services** — Pray that worship would help everyone connect with God and be changed by Him.

Encourage the students to pray for each other specifically—names, situations, school, and family.

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## **CLOSING THOUGHT**

The gospel shakes things up. When Jesus works in our lives, it can make things uncomfortable—but that's a sign of growth. Like Paul's ministry in Ephesus, following Jesus can ripple out to change your friends, family, and even your school. Stand firm, trust God, and let Him use your life to make a difference.

### **Challenge for the Week:**

- Pick **one area** of life where Jesus wants to take the lead (phone, friends, time, habits).

- Take **one action step** this week: pray, serve, encourage someone, or give up an idol.
- Optional: Share your step with a friend or mentor and ask them to check in with you next week.

*Scripture Reminder:* Acts 19:20 – “So the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.” Even small choices can make a big difference.

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## LOOKING AHEAD

*Encourage your group to look ahead as we resume the series on Acts next week.*

### January 25, 2026 — Acts 20:1–16

Next week, we'll see Paul traveling and caring for the churches he started.

Think about:

- How does Paul balance danger, priorities, and God's calling?
- What can we learn about staying faithful even when ministry or following Jesus is hard?
- How might God be calling you to serve faithfully at school, home, or in your friend group?

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## COMMENTARY

### Acts 19:21-41

**19:21.** Almost abruptly Luke tells us Paul had decided to leave the Lycus Valley and head back to Jerusalem—by going in the opposite direction. Obviously, he wanted to revisit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, and then he would head for Rome. Why go back to Jerusalem when he was already hundreds of miles on the way to Rome? Luke does not tell us, but Romans 15 explains that he needed to take a collection back to the Jerusalemite Christians (vv. 25-31). That collection presumably came from churches in Greece rather than Ephesus. Luke was not finished with the Ephesian narrative, but he set the tone here for what will drive the rest of this book—on to Rome.

**19:22.** Typically, missionary evangelism requires preparation, so Timothy and Erastus headed into Greece while Paul stayed at Ephesus a while longer. This is the first mention of Erastus though he appears in 2 Timothy 4:20 as a team member and friend of Paul with a special interest in the Corinthian congregation. Paul would go to Rome, of course, but in chains. He could not have known that when making the announcement at Ephesus any more than you and I can see what lies ahead.

**19:23-24.** What about the Ephesian account prompted Luke to refer to Christianity as “the Way” throughout this narrative (18:26; 19:9; 19:23)? Perhaps this early designation of the gospel seemed appropriate in the primitive conditions at Ephesus. Or maybe Luke wanted his readers to understand that the riot account he will now unfold was

directed against all believers, not just Paul. In any case, the issue centered on economics, no small point of contention at Ephesus where the temple of Artemis was. Thousands of pilgrims and tourists came to Ephesus to visit the temple and, as in any situation throughout the history of civilization, dealers in religious artifacts surrounded such a valuable site. Since the preaching of the gospel had turned many away from the hideous cult, local silversmiths and their union organizer, Demetrius, decided to counterattack.

**19:25-27.** It was not by accident then that Demetrius mixed economics and religion in his appeal to his fellow craftsmen. In Ephesus the two were closely linked. Luke left no doubt that Demetrius's real concern was the damage Paul's preaching was doing to his economic interests. Still, as a skilled demagogue Demetrius was quick to bring religion and patriotism into the picture, which were much more prone to get the public attention. Note that he began by assembling all his fellow craftsmen and the workers who assisted them.

**19:28-31.** Beginning on an economic note, Demetrius now had the crowd stirred up at the religious level. Devotion or patriotism sells better than greed any day, so the whole city was excited. In the absence of Paul, Gaius and Aristarchus became victims of the crowd which rushed into the massive theater, the largest public building in Ephesus. Located on the western slope of Mount Pion, the open-air amphitheater held approximately 25,000 people. Ever the optimist, Paul wanted to face that screaming mob, but the believers restrained him. Luke adds, some of the officials of the province also begged him to stay out of the theater. This refers to Asiarchs, members of wealthy Roman families which stressed loyalty to the Emperor.

**19:32-34.** The word "assembly" in verse 32 translates "ekklesia," which we have come to recognize as the New Testament word for "church." Here it simply means a group of called-out ones, in this case a crowd dedicated to anarchy and riot. A typical mob—screaming whatever came into their heads and many (Luke says most) having no idea what they were doing in the theater. The Jews pushed Alexander to the front. Perhaps he intended to explain that all this fuss was not caused by the Jews; they had raised no complaint about Artemis worship before this Christian evangelist came to town. Since Jews were as odious to the pagan Ephesians as Christians, they took up their chant in unison for about two hours.

**19:35-36.** Luke introduces an unlikely and anonymous hero who became the secular counterpart to Gamaliel of the Sanhedrin. The city clerk was probably a record-keeper of some type, though some suggest he would have been the chief executive officer of the city, perhaps parallel to a modern-day mayor. He recognized immediately that Roman officials could interpret this riot as a violation of Pax Romana and Ephesus might be in danger of losing self-governing privileges. The image which fell from heaven scholars generally identify as a meteorite since such a stone formed the center of worship at one of the other sites of Artemis worship (Roman world contained thirty-three).

**19:37-39.** The clerk first pointed out that the two Christians whom they had seized were not guilty of any crime. They had not blasphemed the goddess or robbed the temple (v. 37). Probably by the latter was meant that they had not robbed the temple of the respect due it. The clerk then outlined the two primary legal avenues Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen could follow if they had any grievances against the Christians. There was the provincial court conducted by the Roman proconsul on set days (v. 38). There was also the regular town assembly (*ekkleōesia*, v. 39). This mob might represent more than the usual turnout for a regular meeting of the *deōmos* in the theater, but this was not a regular day for the town meeting and was certainly not being conducted in an orderly fashion.

**19:40-41.** The clerk then clinched his argument. The Ephesians were running the danger of being charged with insurrection, since they really had no legally valid basis for their unruly behavior (v. 40). In v. 40 the clerk clarified where the real danger lay—not from Paul but from the unruly Ephesians. The clerk's counsel carried the day. He dismissed the gathering, and the crowd dispersed.