

## STUDY GUIDE

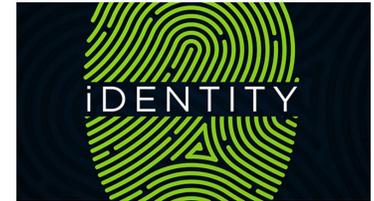
### CHURCH NAME

IMPRINT: LIVING OUR YOUR IDENTITY

PAUL IN CORINTH

ACTS 18:1-17

06/11/2017



### MAIN POINT

We can trust God's leadership and His work in our life when it comes to sharing the gospel with others.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What does it mean to be an ambassador?**

**Outside of your service to Christ, have you ever served as an ambassador or representative of something? What type of commitment did that position require?**

An ambassador is someone who represents someone or something else while living in a foreign land. As ambassadors of Christ, we must recognize that we are representing Him and His kingdom wherever we go and whatever we do. We can trust that God will lead us into specific situations where we will be able to share His message with those we come in contact with.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 18:1-4.**

**According to these verses, how would you describe the general attitude toward Christians during this time period?**

**Why do you think Luke included this brief reference to Paul's job as a tentmaker? What do we learn about his ministry approach from this detail?**

Paul's tentmaking job was a means to an end for him to travel and spread the gospel message. During this time in Corinth, Paul's primary means of earning a living was not vocational ministry. He shared the gospel in the midst of his day-to-day life and work.

**How could your present job be "tentmaking" to support your family while you engage in God's kingdom work?**

**Look again at verse 4. How was Paul being faithful to the vision and call he received on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:15-16)?**

**HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 18:5-6.**

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**How did Paul's ministry change after Timothy and Silas came to him? Read 2 Corinthians 11:9 for insight.**

Paul often supported himself, as the tentmaking showed. He evidently took no money from the Corinthian Christians (1 Cor. 9:6-15). He worked at his trade during his initial mission to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9). Later in Ephesus, he would support not only himself but his coworkers as well (Acts 20:34). After the arrival of Timothy and Silas, Paul could preach in the synagogue every day, not just on the Sabbath when he wasn't working.

**How did the Jews in Corinth respond to Paul's preaching? How would you characterize Paul's reaction to the Jews' response?**

**What does this scene from Paul's ministry teach us about the responsibility we have as ministers of the gospel?**

Paul had been a faithful watchman in the synagogue at Corinth. He had proclaimed God's message of salvation in Christ. If they failed to respond, they were responsible, not Paul. Despite their responses, Paul never gave up on his fellow Jews.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 18:7-11.**

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**According to these verses, what were some of the results of Paul's change of preaching venue?**

Not just Gentile God-fearers but Jews as well were led to Christ in Corinth, despite the uproar in the synagogue. Crispus, a high-ranking synagogue official, along with his entire household, were among these. In his first letter to Corinth, Paul reminded the Corinthians that Crispus had been one of the few of their number that he personally had baptized (1 Cor. 1:14).

**God spoke to Paul in a vision to direct his ministry. Why would God's words in that vision have encouraged or motivated Paul at that specific moment? How could these words encourage you in your ministry today?**

**In what specific ways has God encouraged your Christian witness lately? What impact did His encouragement have on your attitude and your actions?**

**What are some of the key characteristics of an effective witness that Paul illustrated in his Corinthian experience (vv. 9-11)? How do these apply to our personal ministry?**

Three characteristics of effective witnessing are illustrated by Paul's Corinthian experience. First, he did not give up on his fellow Jews. Second, he relied on the Lord. Only God's Spirit moves someone's heart, but we are responsible for being faithful witnesses. Third, Paul was open to receive instructions and direction from God.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 18:12-17.**

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**How are God's words in verses 9-10 put to the test in this scene?**

**What do you make of Gallio's response to the charges brought against Paul? Why do you think it was worth noting in Acts? What were the implications for Paul's ministry and the spread of the gospel?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What can we learn from Paul's time in Corinth as it relates to the expectations we have for our gospel ministry?**

**What is the biggest hindrance to you sharing the gospel with others, and why do you think that is?**

**In which circle of your life—family, friends, work—do you face the strongest opposition to your witness for Christ? What would it look like for you to live out Paul's example in that area?**

## PRAY

Ask God to give you and your group members a new vision for the people in your area.

## COMMENTARY

### ACTS 18:1-17

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18:1-2. Paul found a fascinating couple in the city. We already know about the decree of Claudius (AD 49–50) driving Jews from Rome, so we know that this couple had not been in Corinth very long. Aquila, a Jew, came from Pontus, a province in the northeastern region of Asia Minor along the Black Sea between Bythynia and Armenia (2:9). His wife Priscilla (Prisca) was likely a Roman citizen. Like Paul, they worked as tentmakers. From everything we know about Priscilla and Aquila, they represent mature Christians whose service to the kingdom swept far beyond their contact with Paul. Clearly, they were already believers by the time he met them in Corinth, probably having come to faith in Rome.

18:3. Paul wrote often about his “secular occupation” and seemed to take a good bit of healthy pride in his self-support (1 Cor. 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Cor. 11:7). Only here, however, does the Bible tell us Paul was a tentmaker. Willingness to work to support oneself while proclaiming the gospel served as a life principle for Paul. A major principle surfaces here: there is no secular duty for a Christian; everything we take on, from changing diapers to governing a state, becomes a form of service to Christ (Col. 3:23-25).

18:4. Probably conforming to the pattern already laid by Priscilla and Aquila, Paul seems to have gone to the synagogue for ministry only on the Sabbath, presumably working full-time during the week. Indeed, Luke seems to make a distinct contrast between verses 4 and 5, primarily aimed at showing again how we accomplish biblical ministry through a team rather than through an individual. Only after Silas and Timothy arrived did Paul give himself completely to preaching. Meanwhile, he dialogued with Jews and proselytes, trying to persuade them to accept the Christian message.

18:5-6. One gets the impression that when Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth from Macedonia, they brought a contribution for Paul's ministry. Second Corinthians 11:8 speaks of the support of other churches while Paul ministered in Corinth, and Phil 4:15 speaks of the generous support of that congregation in his continuing mission endeavor. Now Paul was freed to witness more continually, not just on Sabbaths.

Jewish opposition arose. Paul turned from the synagogue and turned to the Gentiles. The pattern was the same as in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (13:44-47), and it would be repeated again, right up to the end of Acts (28:23-28; cf. 19:8-9). Why did Paul keep returning to the Jews after he seemingly had turned decisively to the Gentiles, and especially when he knew the almost certain resistance that would arise? Perhaps he gave us a clue in his statement that the Corinthian Jews' blood would be on their own heads, not on his hands. We find the same language in Ezekiel's picture of the prophet as a watchman over Israel (33:1-7; cf. 3:18). So Paul always fulfilled his role of witness to his fellow Jews. When it was no longer possible to bear that witness, he moved to the Gentiles. But in the next city he would be back to the synagogue, blowing his warning trumpet.

18:7-8. When Paul left the synagogue, he moved his place of witness to the house of a Gentile God-fearer named Titius Justus, who probably was one of those mentioned in v. 4 as present in the Corinthian synagogue. He probably continued to live with Aquila and Priscilla. Going just next door might appear as somewhat noningratiating toward the Jews, but it could also be indicative that he had not completely given up on them. Indeed, the ruler of the synagogue became a

believer. He likely was the same Crispus mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:14 as one of the few in Corinth upon whom Paul himself administered baptism. We know from Paul's Corinthian correspondence that the church there was sizable, sufficiently so to develop church factions (1 Cor 1:10-17).

18:9-11. Verses 9-11 are a sort of interlude in the narrative. They seem to interrupt the account of the increasing Jewish opposition to Paul, which became full-blown when he was brought before Gallio (vv. 12-17). They are, however, an essential part of the story and are closely related to the trial scene. Their form is that of a divine commissioning narrative in which God or His angel appears to a human agent, gives a task to be performed, and gives an assurance of His presence. The form already is familiar from previous incidents in Acts (5:17-21; 9:10-18; 16:6-10), and Paul would have similar visions on subsequent occasions (23:11; 27:23-24). All of these have elements familiar from the Old Testament texts that discuss the call of the prophets—Moses (Exod 3:2-12), Joshua (Josh 1:1-9), Jeremiah (Jer 1:5-10), and the servant of the Lord (Isa 41:10-14).

Paul's vision fortified him for the extensive witness in Corinth. Corinth was the first city where Paul settled for an extensive period of missionary activity. The pattern heretofore had been for such strong opposition to arise against Paul and his companions in cities where they witnessed as to force their departure. He had no reason to expect otherwise in Corinth. In 1 Cor 2:3 he even stated the fear and misgivings he had on first coming to the city. How would these Greeks and Roman colonials receive him? Already the familiar pattern of strong Jewish opposition was rearing its head. How long could his Corinthian ministry continue? The vision from the Lord provided an answer. Paul was to remain in Corinth and continue his witness there. The Lord was with him. No harm would befall him; no opposition withstand him. This assurance fortified Paul for the eighteen-month ministry in Corinth (v. 11). The successful outcome of his appearance before Gallio further assured him the Lord had indeed kept his promise.

18:12-13. We can fairly well estimate that Paul had been in Corinth since the autumn of AD 50 and remained there until the spring of 52. Gallio became proconsul of Achaia on July 1, AD 51. Apparently, the Corinthian Jews decided it was worth another crack at the renegade rabbi, and they brought him into the court (2 Cor. 5:10). On what charge? The usual one—acting against Roman law. Since the bema was located in a city square, this would have been a very public discussion. The outcome fixed the attitude of Rome toward Paul's ministry.

Was the charge directed against the breaking of Roman law or Jewish law? Certainly a Roman official would be more interested in any case regarding Roman law. The completely disinterested Gallio may tip us that the Corinthian Jews, however unwisely, complained that Paul broke their own Jewish laws. Still, a third possibility suggests that the Jews intended Gallio to understand that Paul had broken Roman law. His interpretation threw the case right back to them since he could find no Roman law violated by Paul's preaching in Corinth.

18:14-17. In typical form, Paul seems quite ready to answer the charge, whether Roman or Jewish law; he could deal with either one. On this occasion he had no opportunity to open his mouth; Gallio didn't want to hear the defendant, since he considered the charge to center only on questions about words and names and your own law. Gallio seems not the least bit interested in Jewish theology. He stated flatly, "I will not be a judge of such things." When he threw them out of the bema, they took it out on Sosthenes, beating him on the spot. Gallio still considered their behavior an internal problem of a minority group, unworthy of Rome's intervention.