WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 19- verses 1-10 (ESV 1028)

Verse 1-4- It's obvious from Paul's previous missionary journeys that his main purpose was to find or recruit disciples to Jesus Christ. Once he found disciples, he did not like to leave them without someone to continue to guide them. So, Luke, our storyteller, wanted us to know that while Paul was beginning his third missionary journey, the recruits in Corinth from his second journey were not neglected. They were being ministered to by Apollos, who had been given thorough instruction through Paul's cohorts, Priscilla and Aquila.

Paul returned to Ephesus just as he had promised. (Acts 18:21, ESV 1027) There he found some people who already believed in the way of Jesus Christ, but they did not know anything about the Holy Spirit. Then he asked them by what means they were baptized. They replied by the means used by John the Baptist. Well, this seemed to present a problem for Paul. Why? Our word, baptism, actually comes from two different but similar Greek words, bapto (bap'-to)- which means to dip or immerse and take out quickly like a temporary dye and the word, baptize (bap-tee'-zo)- which means to plunge or immerse thoroughly in order to create a complete change of state, condition or identity. Both involve cleansing; however, one is not complete and permanent. Paul explains this in verse 3. He referred them to John's own words which pointed to Jesus. (Matthew 3:11-12, ESV 897) Paul wanted them to know that John's water baptism was meant as a ritual to symbolize the removal of sin by our repentance, but it was only temporary until Jesus died and was resurrected. Even Jesus participated in John's water baptism as a ritual because he was yet in the form of a man before his own death, burial and resurrection. (John 1:24-34, ESV 982) Water baptism for us was and is a symbol to publicly show our repentance from sin. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the actual cleansing that is ongoing within us as we submerge ourselves in full submission to Christ. (1 Peter 3:18-22, ESV 1118-1119), (Romans 6:3-6 and 9-11, ESV 1043-1044) This baptism of the Spirit only became available after Jesus was resurrected. That is why Paul wanted these twelve people to know the new baptism which represented death to sin and resurrection to new life free of sin through Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:24-27, ESV 1076) , (John 3:5-6, ESV 983)

Verse 5-7- Once they understood what Paul told them, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then, Paul "laid his hands upon them." This means that Paul prayed over them and blessed them. Then, they spoke in tongues and prophesied as an outward witness to what had taken place inwardly. Verse 7 reminds us that this was not the whole church, but only a small group of people who needed a better understanding of how their cleansing was less about water and more about the redemption of sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Verse 8-10- After this encounter, Paul went into the synagogue to continue his ministry to the Jews and Greeks. For three months he spent his time persuading and disputing with them things concerning the kingdom of God. This time, when some obstinate people became abusive, he left, but he took his followers with him so he could continue teaching them. He held daily sessions in a place called the school of Tyrannus, a secular lecture hall. He did this to ensure that they heard the correct word of God. (Exodus 18:20, ESV 67), (2 Timothy 4:1-2, ESV 1099) Since the hall was a secular public meeting place, we can assume that more than just the disciples heard what Paul was saying. Verse 10 tells us that all the Jews and Greeks in Asia heard the word of the Lord for at these two years. This is more evidence that God uses everything, even separation to further His word.