

Lesson 11. Paul's Third Journey – Ephesus

Acts 19

Nov. 1, 2013

Please remember to read all Bible passages before you teach any lesson so that you are able to answer questions that may be asked about people, places or events.

Do not answer any questions about evil spirits, witchcraft, sorcery, dreams, visions, or other questions of this nature, as there are so many differing views of these kinds of things.

Material Objective:

When the people of Ephesus learned from Paul that practicing sorcery led them to do things that hurt themselves and hurt others ---- they chose to quit practicing sorcery and they chose to get rid of all of their sorcery books.

Student Objectives:

To Realize:

When we are looking at, listening to or reading things that can lead us to do things that will hurt us or hurt others ---- we should choose to quit and choose to get rid of those things.

To Respond:

Get rid of those things we are looking at, listening to or reading that are leading us to do things that will hurt us or hurt others.

Elementary Approaches:

Note to 1st and 2nd grade teachers: substitute "bad spirit" for "evil spirit," each time you see it in the lesson.

1st and 2nd Grade Approach:

Have you ever had a bad dream that woke you up and you were really afraid?

I heard about someone who had bad dreams all the time when she was in the first grade. She would wake up so scared and be shaking all over.

She would jump up and run into the living room — turn on all the lights, and sit there until she stopped shaking and got so sleepy she could go back to bed and back to sleep.

When she got older she learned **why** she had those bad dreams. Listen carefully to find out what she was **doing** that **caused** the bad dreams ---- and what she could have done to **stop** those dreams.

Grades 3 – 5 Approach:

I want to talk with you today about some really bad things that actually happened to some young people. I have changed their names because some of them used to live in this area.

The first one was a thirteen year old that I will call Arch. Arch loved music, and had a good family that supported him while he learned to play several different instruments. You can tell from the picture that his favorite was the guitar.

*At age 13, things started out great for Arch. He started his own band — and his band was **good** ---- **so** good ---- people in the area paid them to play at parties and community events.*

His parents let him use a large room in their basement for practice, and told him that he and his band could decorate the room however they wanted. The guys in his band came every afternoon after school to practice ---- and some of the neighborhood kids would come to listen to their music, too.

*However, Arch's music began to change. His parents **noticed** the change ---- but unfortunately — they didn't pay any **attention** to it.*

About two years after this, Arch came home alone one day after school. He went down into the basement — and he tried to kill himself.

Fortunately his mother just happened to come home early from work that day — found him — called 911 and got him to the hospital in time to save his life.

Arch's Mom and Dad were shocked and devastated! Arch had everything going for him. His parents could not understand why their son would want to kill himself.

*But they found out later ---- that there **was** something ---- that **led** Arch to do this awful thing.*

*This next boy I want to tell you about was only in the fourth grade ---- when he started doing something that led **him** ---- to ruin his life. He is alive today and if we could go to him for an interview, he would tell us **exactly** what led him to do the awful thing he did.*

*He is presently in prison in the state of Texas — serving a life sentence without parole ---- which means he will **never** get out of prison. And the reason he is in prison for the rest of his life is because he seriously hurt ---- and then murdered ---- an innocent person.*

*Later I will tell you what it **was** that this young man started doing at an early age ---- that **led** him to commit this awful crime.*

The last boy I want to tell you about was a seven year old. He had a baby brother who was only four years old. Unfortunately these two little guys were left at home alone ---- sometimes for days at a time.

*So here is this seven year old — a **second** grader — who did not **begin** to know what **you** knew in second grade ---- because he didn't have anyone at home **teaching** him or training his thinking.*

Now this kid was a TV bug. He couldn't **wait** to get home from school and turn on the TV ---- because the TV was ---- in a way ---- his babysitter ---- since his parents were hardly ever around.

His favorite shows were **action** shows — the kind with lots of fighting and shooting and killing. As far as this seven-year-old was concerned ---- the more guns and fighting and explosions in a movie ---- the **better**.

He often would play act with his little brother and pretend to be some character he saw on TV. They would act like they were fighting, have shootouts, and attack and ambush each other.

The problem was ---- this second grader would see an actor get **killed** on one show ---- and then see that same actor playing in **another** show two hours later, alive and well. And sadly ---- the kid thought that the way things happened on **TV** ---- and in the **movies** ---- was the way they happened in real **life**.

One day after watching a TV show, he went to his father's cabinet, got out his father's gun and shot and **killed** his four year old baby brother — **fully expecting** ---- that his little brother would come back to life again ---- like they did on TV.

(Put up board work ?) In **each** of these cases these guys were **doing** something ---- that **led** them to do awful things that hurt themselves ---- or others. And there was something they **each** could have **done** ---- so these awful things would never have happened.

Middle School Approach:

A number of years ago ---- a long time before we had Internet or i-Pods or cell phones ---- a seventh grade boy named Ted Bundy ---- was walking down an alley to school.

Ted passed a place where his neighbors put out their trash, and in the pile was a box sitting beside a trashcan. He picked up something out of the box, looked at it ---- and then ---- he quickly hid it in his schoolbooks.

When he got home from school that afternoon, he hid it in a place where he was sure his parents would not find it. He didn't want them to know anything about it.

Ted Bundy came from a good family. He said his father and mother took him to church every Sunday. They lived in a safe neighborhood and he worked hard at school and made good grades.

But with that **one** thing that Bundy had taken from the box ---- a secret life began for him.

Whenever he could be by himself, he took that thing out ---- and looked at it over and over. He thought it was great. And every time he did this, he got an emotional high ---- a high almost like using alcohol or drugs. What Ted picked up out of the trash that day was a pornographic magazine.

Every time he passed the trash pile ---- he looked for others **like** it ---- and added those to his growing collection. Ted didn't know he had started on a path for him that was as **bad** ---- or worse than drugs.

As destructive as drugs are ---- the pornography that Ted collected did something to him that was far worse ---- that pornography created a change within his mind ---- that led him to do terrible things ---- things he never ever thought he would do.

As time went by, Ted's life went totally out of control, and within a period of about four years, he had murdered over 100 girls and women. Finally, he was caught, found guilty and put to death in the electric chair in the state of Florida.

Before he died, Ted gave an interview. In this interview, he said, "You are going to kill me, and that will protect society from me. But there are many, many more people who have the same evil, hurtful thoughts that I have, and you are doing nothing about them."

Ted Bundy was saying that the pornography he found in the trash ---- and went back to over and over ---- was the thing that shaped his thinking, and led him to do the terrible things he did.

But there was something he could have **done** ---- that would have **prevented** those horrible things from ever happening ---- and he would not have destroyed **his** life ---- and the lives of so many **others**.

Grades 1 – 8:

In today's Bible lesson, Paul helped a group of people to realize that some things **they** were doing were causing them to hurt themselves **and** hurt **others** ---- and we'll see what **these** people chose to do ---- that stopped this hurt from happening.

It took place on Paul's third missionary trip. One of the places he **went** to on this trip was a city called Ephesus. *(Put up board work Ephesus)* He spent about two years there ---- possibly because the people **there** ---- called the Ephesians ---- wanted his help.

There was one really **big** thing the Ephesians were doing ---- and it was the same thing that Elymas was doing on the Island of Cyprus ---- and that was sorcery.

Remember ---- the Bible writers say that God warned His people about **using** sorcery. They said He told His people they were not to have anything to do with witchcraft, wizardry, fortune telling, communicating with the dead ---- or anything **like** this. Paul probably preached about this wherever he went.

However, in **Ephesus**, sorcery was a **very big** practice and a **very** big business. You could have gone **anywhere** in the city and bought a book about sorcery!

Remember back then books did not look like ours — they were written on what is called scrolls. Scrolls were long rolls made of animal skin or paper, but they cost a lot of money to buy.

However, the people who could **afford** it were willing to pay the **money** ---- because they could make even **more** money ---- **selling** the information in the books to desperate people who depended on sorcery for their help.

Back then, they had no hospitals or medicines like we have today, and so when they got sick ---- many people went to a sorcerer to get help.

They would pay lots of money to the sorcerer ---- and he would look in his book of sorcery ---- and hunt up a **cure** for them. Then he would tell them to **do** something ---- that they **hoped** would make them better.

Now I won't go through all the cures I told you about **last** year ---- but let me tell you just this **one**. It sounds so silly ---- and you are going to think that I am making it up, but I'm **not**. This is actually **written** in their sorcery books.

Let's say you had a wart on the top of your head — and you know if you **did** ---- you would **really** want to get **rid** of it. So the sorcerer would take your money ---- and go look in his sorcery book.

Then he would tell you that the cure for a wart was to go find a **frog** ---- look at it ---- cross your eyes ---- and kiss the frog on the nose — and that **wart** would go **away**! And you would pay him **good money** ---- to **tell** you that?

So the sorcerers in Ephesus made a **killing** doing this kind of thing — they made a **lot** of money — until **Paul** came to town!

The Bible writer says that when Paul got there, he preached to everyone in that country, and God used Paul to help many people by causing their diseases to leave, and **evil spirits** / **bad spirits** to go out of them.

You remember that some people were so into sorcery that they not only **read** the sorcery **books** and did what they **said** ---- but they would actually allow **evil spirits** / **bad spirits** to come into them and take over and **control** them — as the girl at Philippi did in the last lesson.

Maybe at **first** they thought it was kind of **neat**. But once they let the **evil spirit** / **bad spirit** come in and control them, they probably wished they had never done it.

According to the Bible writers, the **evil spirits** / **bad spirits** would do awful things to them. Sometimes they would make people **hurt** themselves ---- throw themselves into a **fire** ---- take sharp stones and **cut** themselves ---- or run completely **naked** through the streets and scream and yell like a **crazy** person. And sometimes the **evil spirits** / **bad spirits** would even cause them to attack other people.

But when a person saw how awful life **was** with an **evil spirit** / **bad spirit** in them — when they saw it was ruining their **life** ---- and hurting **them** and other people **around** them ---- they wanted to get **rid** of the **evil spirit** / **bad spirit** ---- but they **couldn't** — it would not leave.

So the person would hire a sorcerer ---- and pay him lots of money to try to make the **evil spirit / bad spirit** **leave**. The sorcerer would work for **years** and **years** trying to get rid of it. However ---- though the sorcerer would get **rich** ---- the **person** would still have the **evil spirit / bad spirit**.

Well there were seven brothers, all sons of a man named Sceva. (*Pronounced see–va.*) Sceva and his seven sons were known for trying to get rid of **evil spirits / bad spirits** in people.

Now the Bible doesn't say how this happened ---- but evidently these brothers saw Paul do something that absolutely **impressed** them.

Perhaps they watched as Paul put his hands on a person with an **evil spirit / a bad spirit** ---- and they heard Paul say, "I command you in the name of Jesus to come out of him," and the spirit came out of the person!

If those brothers **did** get to see Paul do something like that, they would have been **so** impressed! They probably were poking each other, saying, "Wow! That's **great**! Did you see how **fast** he did that? That is some **powerful** spell! That's not in any of **our** sorcery books. **We** could really **use** that spell!"

They probably said, "We've got to get that formula down — how'd he say that?" And maybe they began to try and get the words down just right. They were probably thinking, "Boy we could make a **lot** of money doing **this**."

Of course those seven brothers probably never stopped to think of **why** it worked for Paul ---- they had no **idea** why it worked for him.

They didn't realize that when **Paul** commanded the bad spirits to **leave** ---- according to the Bible writers ---- he had done it by the power of Jesus' Spirit in him.

And they said Jesus' power was stronger than the **evil spirit's / bad spirit's** power, so Jesus could make the **evil spirit / bad spirit** leave for Paul.

But these seven brothers did not **follow** Jesus. They were very much involved in sorcery, and even though they **heard** what Paul **said** ---- they had not paid much attention to Paul's teachings about Jesus.

They just thought Paul had a great new spell that they needed to add to their sorcery books. And they couldn't wait to try it out! Can't you just hear those seven brothers advertising — maybe putting up signs saying —

"Is there an **evil spirit / a bad spirit** controlling you? **We** are the experts to call. Just dial 1-800-THE BROS."

Grades 1 & 2: Now you know they didn't really have any phones, but somehow I am sure that they let people know about this new spell they were going to use to get rid of **bad spirits**.

Grades 1 – 8: Now remember I said we don't know exactly **how** it happened ---- but it must not have been too long before they got a call for help, and they went to the home of a man who wanted to get rid of an **evil spirit** / **bad spirit**.

The Bible doesn't say how **many** of the brothers went, but I can see all of them going along just to see how **well** this new "spell" was going to work!

I can just hear those brothers saying, "Oh, you've called the **experts!** We can **help** you! **Sir** ---- it's going to be worth **every penny** you **spent**. You won't **believe** how fast this will work. You'll be so glad you called **us** instead of one of those clumsy sorcerers who doesn't know what he is doing!"

When the brothers got themselves all set, one of them probably put his hands on the man with the **evil spirit** / **bad spirit** while the other six anxiously watched. He said — probably in a strong voice, "We command you — by the same Jesus whom **Paul** preaches — we command you to come **out** of **him!**"

And you know what **happened?** **Something** happened — but not at **all** what they **expected!** The Bible says that the **evil spirit** / **bad spirit** talked **back** to the brothers.

That spirit said something like, "I know who **Jesus** is ---- and I know who **Paul** is ---- but who in the world are **you?**"

And according to the Bible, what the **evil spirit** / **bad spirit** **meant** was, "I know Jesus has power over me, and I have to listen to him ---- and I know **Paul** has power over me ---- but what makes you think **you** can tell me what to do?"

Then it says that the man with the **evil spirit** / **bad spirit** **jumped** on those brothers ---- and evidently he beat them up and -- in the process -- **ripped** their clothes **right off of them** ---- and they took off **running** for their lives!

Can't you just see it? You live in Ephesus and you and your friend are looking out your window when all of a sudden, "whoom" — here goes **one** guy streaking by; "whoom" — there goes **another** guy streaking by ---- and then one, two, three, four, five **more** naked guys ---- **fly** past you ---- with this **wild** man hot on their heels!

And word spread like **wild fire** ---- and everyone in Ephesus was scared.

They probably were saying something like, "Did you hear what happened when the seven brothers tried to cast that evil spirit out of that man? That guy beat the **socks** off of them — they **flew** out of there!"

Now some sorcerers may have thought, "Aw, that won't happen to me. Those guys just **messed up** because they didn't know how to **do** it right. I've got the best **books**. I paid a lot of **money** for them ---- and **I** know how to work these formulas."

But many of the **other** sorcerers must have been saying things like, “I don’t want that to happen to **me**! I believe what Paul is saying and I’m going to **listen** to him! I’m **finished** with this **sorcery**!”

And the Bible says that many of them **did** quit their sorcery, and they started following Jesus. But I’m sure it was so hard! Stop and think! Suppose **you** were one of those sorcerers and you had **quit** practicing sorcery —

---- and then your **son** got sick. Let’s say you did everything you **could** for him to try and get him better, but he just kept getting worse and worse.

You’d pace the floor in your house — desperate to save your son’s life. And you would pass by the bookshelf with all those old sorcery books on it.

You’d see one ---- and remember **that** book had a spell that **seemed** to cure someone once **before**. You’d be thinking, “Maybe if I just **looked** — oh no ---- no ---- I can’t go back to that stuff. Paul said it will cause us trouble!”

So you’d pace the floor again and when you turned around you’d see another sorcery book on the shelf and think, “Well — maybe **this** one would help. No! I can’t get back into this stuff! It can’t help us. It will only hurt us!”

What would be pulling you back into the sorcery? What is right there in the house that keeps reminding you of the sorcery that you quit?

Those sorcery books full of all kinds of spells! What would you need to do with those books?

Get rid of them! But you may be thinking if you just throw them out, someone **else** may find those books and then, **they** might start using sorcery, and it may hurt them.

What would be one thing they could do with those sorcery books to keep those books from hurting **themselves** or anyone **else** in Ephesus?

Burn them!

And that’s exactly what the Bible says those people did! They got together and had the biggest bonfire you’ve ever seen — and the most expensive one.

The sorcery books they burned that day were worth a fortune — around \$8,000 to \$10,000 back in Bible times — which would probably equal **millions** of dollars today!

But to those Ephesians — those sorcery books would only hurt them.

Those people decided that they did not want their sorcery books to have a hold on them — to influence them or have control over them and lead them to do wrong, any longer.

Notice these people didn't just stop practicing sorcery. They also got **rid** of the things that were **helping** them practice sorcery — the things that were leading them to do ---- what according to the Bible ---- God said was wrong.

They got **rid** of the things that led them to hurt themselves and others.

Grades 1 & 2: Remember I told you about the bad dreams that first grade girl kept having. Sometimes when we have a bad dream it's because of something we **saw** — not **always** ---- but sometimes.

Well when this girl got older she realized what she was **doing** that made it easy for her to have those bad dreams. After school each day she and her brother and sister would go to their friend's house — and they would watch scary movies.

She learned that when you put scary thoughts in your head all the time — they can begin to get a hold of your thoughts ---- and they can cause you to have bad dreams or nightmares. She learned later that what she should have **done** ---- was just stop **watching** those scary movies.

How many of you watch shows where the kids sass their parents and are disrespectful all the time — where they are always making wise cracks and acting hateful.

Before we know it we find ourselves saying the same type things and acting the same way. It's so easy to do. What we put into our minds will often come out in action. If we listen to music or watch movies where someone curses ---- before we know it ---- those words are coming out of our mouths and we don't even realize it -----

Grades 3 – 5: *Do you remember I told you there were some **things** that led each of those three young men we talked about to do the awful things they did.*

Arch's parents went home from the hospital that night wondering why their son, who had everything going for him, would want to take his own life.

They went down into the basement room where Arch practiced and saw pictures of weird looking musicians on the walls.

Arch's parents checked on the album covers and read where many of the musicians in those pictures admitted that they practiced satanic ceremonies.

They listened to some of the songs Arch had been listening to and found that over and over again the lyrics — the words in the songs — talked about getting rid of yourself; ending it all; committing suicide.

Over and over again Arch had filled his mind with the ideas in those songs ---- until it came out in action — when he tried to kill himself. Thankfully his mom got him to the hospital in time, but how sad.

Obviously what had gotten a hold on Arch and led him to do what he did — was his music. What did he need to do — what did he need to get rid of? That music!

*Does that mean all music is bad? Of **course** not — there is plenty of good music out there.*

But don't you know when you hear a song and it is saying wrong things in it? He should have known and should have gotten rid of those songs.

Now some may say, "But I like the beat of that song." Fine — find a different song with the same good beat, but with different words — not words that talk about doing wrong or harmful things.

Unfortunately, Arch didn't do this ---- and almost lost his life because of it.

The next boy we talked about started down the path that ruined his life when he was only in the fourth grade.

Some of the kids in school were passing around pictures called pornography or porn. There were kids who took a look ---- but as soon as they saw what the pictures were ---- they turned and walked away. But this kid didn't.

He has told people who interviewed him in prison that instead of walking away from those pictures in the fourth grade, the more he looked at them — the more he wanted to see. As he got older, he started a collection of pornographic movies and films.

And the more he got, the more he wanted — until it became all that he thought of — and one day, he chose to do the kind of things he had been looking at and watching.

When he was about twenty or twenty-one — he seriously hurt ---- and then murdered ---- a totally innocent person.

Obviously — what was it that got a hold on him and led him to ruin his life and the life of another innocent person? The films and pictures — the porn.

*But who was responsible? The film or pictures? That **guy** decided from fourth grade on ---- what he would look at and what he would watch. Remember ---- what we look at and watch — often comes out in action.*

*And then the little seven-year-old boy is so sad to me. The things that got a hold on **him** and led him to do **wrong** were the things he was watching on TV.*

*That doesn't mean that all TV is bad — it certainly **isn't**. But this kid had no one there to guide him or teach him. I really wish his parents had explained things to him and protected him from the kinds of programs he was watching on TV.*

What he was watching and listening to was what he acted out when he killed his little brother ---- not realizing that he would not be able to come back to life.

*Now we have talked about how damaging the misuse of media like music, magazines, and television can be on people, but there is something **else** that nearly every one of you uses everyday — some of you may even have access to it in your own rooms at home.*

You can use it to reach around the world and it can be very helpful when you want to research something, or shop, or just chat with your friends or family. For things like this, it can be priceless. All you need is a computer or even just a cell phone.

What is it? The Internet!

*But the Internet can also be a **terrible** thing for us because of the images and things on it that are pornographic.*

*People think, “What’s it going to hurt? It’s just a **picture**. I’m just **looking** ---- I’m not **doing** anything wrong!”*

*But pornography can change the whole way you think about other people, and can even change the way you treat other people. For example, viewing pornography can lead a person to **do** things in the **future** — that **today** — he or she thinks, “I would **never do** that.”*

Many psychologists believe that pornography destroys marriages today and has caused many families to end in divorce.

*The bad thing is — people who create and sell pornography understand how addictive those pictures are — they **know** that the more pornography people see ---- the more it gets a hold on them and the more they **want** to see. So they know that if they can give you even just a glimpse of it — just a peek — they may very well succeed in getting you hooked on their websites and then you will pay them money to see more and more.*

*That is why we would be **so wise** to **not look** at it even the **first** time -- because when we do ---- it has a chance to get a hold on us.*

Middle School Conclusion:

And that is what Bundy ---- the guy at the beginning of our lesson needed to do.

You remember Bundy hid those pornographic magazines. As long as he kept them hidden in his room, they were there for him to look at ---- over and over again.

But after he had looked at them so much, eventually he got bored with them and that’s when Bundy began to look for hard porn ---- pornography that includes violence.

He was sure he would never **do** any of the things he read about and looked at in the hard porn magazines ---- but he began to **imagine** himself doing those things. He went through high school having these violent sexual fantasies, but not **doing** them.

However, when he got to college, things changed. The things that he had **imagined** in his **mind** while he looked at pornography ---- he now began to actually **do**. And while on a date with a girl ---- he raped her, murdered her and then hid her body.

Bundy could not believe that he actually **did** this terrible thing. He was horrified with himself and totally ashamed. Back at his apartment ---- he threw up again and again. He cried and cried ---- and told himself he would never do it again.

Not long after this ---- he was on another date ---- feeling certain that he had control of his thoughts and emotions. But then the same violent thoughts returned and once more he raped and murdered that girl, too.

Just as before, he was horrified with his behavior and was desperate not to let it happen again. He felt very sorry and deeply ashamed for what he had done.

Although Bundy had every intention of stopping his violent behavior ---- within about four years, it is believed he had murdered over 100 girls and women. Many of their bodies were never found.

He was eventually caught, found guilty and given the death penalty.

Remember that before Bundy was executed, he was interviewed. In that interview, another thing he said was, "I don't want to be put to death. I want to live, but even if I were not going to be executed, I would never want to be free because I am not safe. I can just look at a pornographic picture and all those thoughts and emotions come back. I cannot get rid of them."

But we tend to say, "Yeah ---- but just watching stuff or hearing stuff doesn't bother **me**."

How many of you watch the Super Bowl each year? Do you know how much companies pay to advertise in just a short, thirty-second slot during the Super Bowl ---- three million dollars ---- for one thirty second ad.

Why on earth would they pay so much for just thirty seconds? It's because they know that what we see and hear influences how we act, what we say and what we do.

So even though some **say**, "Looking at porn doesn't bother **me**. It doesn't make **me** do wrong things," ---- research **proves** ---- what we listen to, hear and see ---- we will end up **thinking, saying, doing** or **wanting to do**.

Research also shows that pornography has an extremely destructive effect on relationships, and especially on marriages. And that's because pornography can change the whole way you think about other people, and can even change the way you treat other people.

Many psychologists believe that pornography destroys marriages today and has caused many families to end in divorce.

*The bad thing is — people who create and sell pornography understand how addictive those pictures are — they **know** that the more pornography people see ---- the more it gets a hold on them and the more they **want** to see. So they know that if they can give you even just a glimpse of it — just a peek — they **may** very well succeed in getting you hooked on their websites and then you will pay them money to see more and more.*

*That is why we would be **so wise** to **not look** at it even the **first** time ---- because when we do, it has a chance to get a hold on us.*

*All information that your mind soaks **in** ---- has the power to **influence** you ---- to change your thinking ---- **and** ---- to change your behavior ----*

Grades 1 – 8: ---- because what we look at ---- and what we listen to ---- is often what we find ourselves doing.

Remember what the sorcerers in Ephesus did with their books on sorcery? They believed the books influenced them and led them to hurt themselves and others — so they got **rid** of them.

Now you **can't** go around the house throwing things away without checking with your parents first. But we **can** decide **ourselves** to not **listen** to, **read**, **look** at or **watch** those things that can hurt us or cause us to hurt others.