

Pastor's Bible Study
Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
November 19, 2009

Acts 19:1—23:35

FIRST: Close reading continued: Another look at the power of stories.

1. In Acts 19, we are given considerable detail about Paul's ministry in the city of Ephesus. The first thing that happens to Paul is that he encounters believers who were baptized into John's baptism, but not yet baptized in the name of Jesus. Once they were baptized in Jesus' name, the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they began "speaking in tongues" *γλωσσολαλία* (*glossolalia*). What may we conclude from this story about the power of spoken words?
2. In Acts 19, we read about "seven sons of Sceva" who used the name of Jesus to try to cast out demons, yet, their efforts failed. Why do you think they did not succeed in casting out the demons?
3. In Acts 20:22-24, Paul speaks of the perils of his ministry. Why do you think Paul uses the analogy of a "race" to describe his ministry?
4. In Acts 22:1-21, we read a detailed version of Paul's testimony. Why role does Paul's testimony play in this story? What role might testimonies play in the lives of Christians today?
5. In Acts 22:22-29, we read a story that involves Paul's Roman citizenship. What does this tell us about the status of Romans in the ancient world? Why is so much attention paid to Paul's status as a Roman citizen?
6. In Acts 23:6, the phrase "resurrection of the dead" occurs. We learn here that the Pharisees and the Sadducees differed on their understanding of *metaphysics* (that which is beyond or above the physical world). Discuss the differences, based on information provided in verse 8.