

Acts 20:17-38 **A GROWING MOVEMENT**

Christ-like Leadership

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

Read Aloud Acts 20:17-38

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own words. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)

Acts 20:17-21

1 Paul is nearing a major transition in his ministry. One element of this transition is that he will no longer see the Ephesian church. For a farewell, Paul speaks some pointed words to the leaders (the elders) of the church at Ephesus.

Paul begins his final exhortation by reminding the elders of his own example. Jesus warned the people of Israel that they should listen to some of the teachings of the Pharisees, but that they should not follow their example. Matthew 23:3

Paul did not follow the example of the Pharisees, but rather of Christ. He practiced what he preached. He knew that the Church did not simply need teachers, but they needed father-like examples in the faith. 1 Corinthians 4:15

2 Paul's example was more than good theology and effective counseling skills. He demonstrated the following fruit as a Christ-like leader:

- A** (vs 18) "From the first day"- Paul was **consistent** in his testimony. From the first day until the last day he was with them, he demonstrated a Christ-like life. While godly leaders still battle their sin nature, from their public life to their secret life, they are disciplined for the glory of God.
- B** (vs 19) "Tears, Trials, Humility"- Paul was **resilient** in his testimony. He experienced many hardships. From persecution, to betrayal, to his own physical weakness, Paul was challenged in every way, yet he pushed forward. Godly leaders are not turned away from the pressures of life and ministry. Instead they pushed forward in humility relying on the grace of God.
- C** (vs 20) "Kept back nothing"- Paul did not preach a **lukewarm** message. He did not hold back the hard truth the Ephesians needed to hear at times. Godly leaders preach the whole counsel of God. They present the Word of God and allow the Word to convict and change the hearts of the listeners. It is not a leader's job to make the Word of God palatable or pick and choose what they preach based upon what they perceive people will receive.
- D** (vs 21) "Repentance & Faith"- Paul called the Church to not only learn about God but to be people of **action**. At the center of Paul's message was a call to turn away from sin and to place faith in the promises of God. Both of these are action words. Repentance is turning from something, and faith is turning to something. Godly leaders call their flock to action and hold them accountable to what the Word of God declares.



Question: What are some examples of leaders you have had in your life who live an example like Paul?



Question: How are you living out the above example as a leader? Whether it is with your family, friends, church, community, or co-workers; you have areas of influence that can be an opportunity to live out the above truths.

Acts 20:22-24

Not only had Paul given the Church a testimony to follow, he was also giving them inspiration by his current obedience. Paul had not grown comfortable in his accomplishments, but rather was digging even deeper in his commitment to finish the race God had given him to accomplish.

Despite being persecuted for years, Paul was not afraid to embrace more suffering. In fact, the Holy Spirit had already warned him that more suffering was near. So what motivated Paul?



A He was focused on eternity - Romans 8:18

B He was focused on the mission of God and the souls of men - Romans 9:1-5

C He had counted his life as loss - Galatians 2:19-21



Question: As you look at the motivations of Paul, which area do you think you could grow in?

Acts 20:25-27

Paul had no regrets in his ministry. He preached the whole counsel of God. He preached God's love, and he preached God's wrath. He preached God's discipline, and he preached God's grace.

Having a clean conscience is essential in the Christian life. A clean conscience comes from both a pure and honest life, as well as a boldness to share the whole truth and not shrink back in times of conflict and hard truth.

Acts 20:28-32

Paul begins to close his exhortation by reminding the Church, and specifically the elders, of the spiritual war that they are in. Not only are they in a war, but they are responsible for the people of God. They are responsible for the wolves that would come in from both outside and from within the church.

Paul reminded the elders that their role was not a self appointed one, but rather a Holy Spirit appointed one. God had placed them in a position of authority, and therefore they would be held accountable by Christ Himself for how they led His Church.



This calling and mission was so serious that the Apostle Paul continually warned the church and its leaders, not only with his words, but with a broken heart and by example.



Question: When you see the charge that the Apostle Paul gives the elders of the church, what comes to mind?



It is a difficult calling. May we be praying for the leaders of our church, the leaders in the valley, and the leaders across the world who face persecution.

Acts 20:32-38

1 Paul closes his exhortation with a few interesting points. He points out that he and his team were not in the ministry for the sake of money. In fact, for portions of Paul's ministry he worked with his hands for his financial support and received very minimal if any support from the Church.

Paul explains in 1 Timothy 5:18 that it is good for the church to pay their Elders/Pastors who labor in the Word and prayer. However, Paul made it a point in his ministry to demonstrate a generous heart. He worked not only for himself, but also for the purpose of helping support other ministry leaders and the poor and needy.

2 **Question: Supporting the poor and needy is an essential theme throughout the Scripture. While this requires wisdom, it also requires a generous heart. Sometimes we can justify not supporting the poor due to the stigma around laziness, drugs, etc. How are you actively involved in giving to the poor and or the ministry of the Gospel? You do not need to share amounts, but what is your experience in this? You can share both testimonies and challenges.**

2 Finally, Paul's departure was difficult. It was difficult for him personally, and it was difficult for the church. However, multiplication is essential to keep the church healthy and to fulfill the mission of Christ. We must not allow our attachments and love for people stop us from following the calling of Christ.

Let us all consider the cost of following Christ! Luke 14:25-35

Acts 20:17-38 Summary

A large theme of Acts 20:17-38 is the call and role of Elders. Below are the main roles and functions of Elders according to Acts 20:17-38. This is helpful to understand as often times we expect Elders/Pastors to be a jack of all trades. Although Elders are called to serve, they are called in to a specific service from the Lord.

- A** They must maintain a healthy and disciplined walk with the Lord. (vs 28)
- B** They must be proactive in knowing the spiritual health of their flock. (vs 28)
- C** They must respond to a call of God to be in leadership. They must not be self-appointed. The Bible gives us standards in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5, Hebrews 13, and Acts 20, so that the church can discern the difference between a God-appointed leader and a self-appointed leader. (vs 28)
- D** Confront wolves and false teachers. (vs 29-31)
- E** Confront sin and rebellion from those in the church. (vs 29-31)
- F** Cling to the Word of God. (vs 31)
- G** In accordance with the life of Jesus, and then the life of Paul, they must practice what they preach. (vs 17-38)

2 **Question: Could you accurately describe what an Elder/Pastor is according to Scripture? If not please reach out to someone on the Shepherding Team. They would love to discuss this topic and give you resources such as Biblical Eldership, The School of the Shepherds, or PIT Crew.**

Weekly Challenge

Eldership is a high calling. We may not all be called to be Elders, but we are all called ambassadors of Christ. You are called to influence those around you: to provide leadership at your job, leadership within your family, and leadership within your social circle. What is one step you can take to be a more Christ-like leader? If you do not know where to start, perhaps the best place to start is prayer. Be in prayer that God would give you a heart that breaks for the lost; a heart that yearns for the growth of the church and for people to experience more of Christ; a heart that longs for a deeper relationship with Christ yourself. As God deepens our affections and births in us spiritual hunger, we will begin to be much more aware of ways that we can lead for Christ.

Memory Verse

Acts 14:21-23 ESV

²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.