



# LIFE Group Discussion Guide

January 25, 2026

**Acts 20:1-16**

---

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

---

## OPENING

Life often feels like a long road trip—multiple stops, unexpected delays, and moments where you're tired but still moving forward. In Acts 20:1–16, we catch a glimpse of Paul toward the later part of his journey. He's not rushing for comfort or recognition; he's moving with purpose. Even when the road is hard, Paul stays committed to encouraging others and following God's call.

This passage challenges us to ask: **Am I just going through the motions, or am I living with intentional faith?**

**If you could fast-forward one part of your life (school, sports season, family situation, etc.), what would it be and why?**

---

## SCRIPTURE

**Read Acts 20:1–16 together.**

Encourage students to listen for:

- Paul's urgency
- His care for others
- His commitment to God's mission

---

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Paul spends time **encouraging believers**, even though he's on a tight schedule.
- His journey includes **many stops**, not just one destination.
- Paul is intentional with his time because he knows his mission matters.
- He's willing to take the harder route if it helps him stay focused on God's plan.

---

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### **Why do you think Paul made encouragement such a priority while traveling?**

Paul understood that following Jesus can be hard, and believers need encouragement to stay faithful. He knew his time was limited, so he focused on strengthening others spiritually rather than just completing tasks. Encouragement helps people stay grounded in truth and reminded that they're not alone.

### **What does this passage teach us about how to use our time wisely?**

Paul was intentional. He didn't waste time, but he also didn't rush past people. He balanced urgency with purpose. This shows us that using time wisely isn't about being busy—it's about investing in what matters most: people and God's mission.

### **Paul didn't rush past people—even when he was busy. Why is that hard for us today?**

We live in a distracted culture. Phones, schedules, stress, and expectations make it easy to prioritize convenience over connection. Slowing down to care about others takes effort and intentionality, which doesn't always feel natural.

### **How can we stay focused on God when life feels full or stressful?**

Staying focused requires intentional habits—prayer, Scripture, worship, and Christian community. Paul stayed focused because he remembered his purpose. When we remind ourselves *why* we follow Jesus, it helps us stay grounded even when life is overwhelming.

### **What's one distraction in your life that makes it harder to live with purpose?**

Common distractions include social media, sports pressure, school stress, entertainment, or approval from others. Distractions aren't always bad—but they become a problem when they take priority over God.

### **Paul kept moving forward even when his journey was hard or uncertain. What helps you keep trusting God when you don't know what's coming next?**

Trust grows when we remember God's past faithfulness. Prayer, Scripture, and encouragement from other believers remind us that God is in control, even when the future feels unclear—just like Paul trusted God with each step of his journey.

**Why do you think encouragement is such a big part of spiritual growth—especially for students your age?**

Students face pressure, insecurity, and doubt. Encouragement reminds them they are seen, valued, and not alone in their faith. God often uses encouragement from others to strengthen our confidence and perseverance.

**Paul didn't travel alone; he surrounded himself with other believers. How does having the right people around you affect your faith?**

The people around us influence our decisions, attitudes, and values. Being surrounded by believers who encourage faith makes it easier to stay committed to Jesus. Paul knew community was key to endurance and accountability.

**If someone watched your life for a week, what would they say matters most to you? How does that compare to what Paul seemed to value?**

Our actions often reveal our priorities. Paul's life showed that people, encouragement, and obedience to God mattered most. This question challenges students to evaluate whether their daily choices reflect the same priorities—or if adjustments are needed.

- Paul understood that **faithfulness matters more than convenience**. He didn't live reactively—he lived intentionally. Students often feel pressure to rush through life or wait until "later" to take faith seriously. Paul reminds us that **how we live now matters**.

---

## **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

**What is one intentional step you can take this week to use your time in a way that better reflects your faith (at school, online, or at home)?**

**Who is one person God may be prompting you to encourage this week, and what is a practical way you can do that?**

### **"Encouragement Check"**

Encourage each student to intentionally encourage **one person** this week—at school, church, or home—and be ready to share what happened next time you meet.

---

## **PRAYER FOCUS**

Spend time praying together for:

- **Boldness to live intentionally** in everyday life.
- **Strength to resist distractions** that pull us away from God.
- **Our worship services**, that students and leaders would come ready to encounter God and encourage one another.
- **Our church family**, to finish well in faith, just like Paul.

---

## CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul didn't know exactly how his journey would end—but he knew **who he was living for**. Following Jesus isn't about getting through life as fast as possible; it's about staying faithful every step of the way.

*Run your race with purpose—and don't forget to bring others along.*

---

## LOOKING AHEAD

*Encourage your group to look ahead as we continue the series on Acts next week.*

### February 1, 2026 — Acts 20:17–38

Next week, we'll look at one of the most emotional moments in the book of Acts—a heartfelt goodbye. Paul gathers church leaders and shares what really matters when following Jesus. He talks honestly about sacrifice, responsibility, and staying faithful even when the future is uncertain.

We'll discuss:

- What it means to **live with integrity** when no one is watching
- How to **lead and serve others** in a Christ-centered way
- Why finishing well in faith is more important than starting strong

Pay attention to the advice and voices you listen to. Ask yourself: *Who is shaping my faith—and where is God calling me to grow next?*

---

## COMMENTARY

### Acts 20:1-16

**20:1-3a.** We have now reached late A.D. 56 and early 57. This rather extensive ministry in Greece is summarized briefly by Luke though insights from 2 Corinthians, and Romans provide us with a slightly expanded picture. After the riot at the Temple of Diana, Paul encouraged believers in Ephesus and then traveled through western Asia Minor, continuing to encourage and edify Christians throughout the area. This already announced departure (19:21-22) had several very clear objectives: to leave the trouble at Ephesus behind; to encourage believers in the province of Asia and throughout Greece; to meet Titus in Troas (2 Cor. 2:12-13); and to collect offerings for Judea (1 Cor. 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:25-28).

Paul did not find Titus in Troas and hastily crossed the Hellespont to make his way down to Corinth. He met his friend in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5-16). In response to the young man's report from Corinth, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians. We cannot know for sure, but experts estimate that the ministry in Macedonia lasted for over a year. The gospel spread across the Balkan Peninsula at this time, quite possibly as far as Illyricum (Rom. 15:19).

From Macedonia Paul went on to Achaia (Greece) and spent three months at Corinth, where he wrote Romans in the winter of a.d. 57–58. Throughout this time, the collection for the Judean Christians occupied the forefront of Paul's mind. All the epistles written on the third missionary journey mention the offering for the saints (Gal. 2:10; 2 Cor. 8 and 9; Rom. 15:25-32). It is not unthinkable that Paul would have gone on from Greece to Rome and then Spain had he not felt an enormous compulsion to personally take the offering from the Gentile churches back to Jerusalem.

**20:3b-4.** Because of a Jewish plot, Paul abandoned plans to sail from Corinth. Instead he headed back north through Macedonia, taking with him an interesting array of associates to whom Luke links geographical identification: Sopater from Berea (probably same as Sosipater in Rom. 16:21); Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy from Lystra; Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia; and Luke from Philippi (the "we" section begins again in verse 5). The text does not mention a representative from Corinth, and commentators have pondered that omission. Perhaps Paul himself spoke for the Corinthian church. In any case, this large group of companions provided safety for the funds Paul carried and also would represent a stunning array of young Gentile church leadership to display in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:16-24).

**20:5-6.** We should notice that the last "we" section ended in Philippi (16:10-17). That is precisely where Paul picks up Luke again. The Asians went on to Troas, but Luke and Paul (and perhaps others) stayed at Philippi for celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Some suggest that they may have observed the "Christian Passover," i.e., Easter, with the church at Philippi (1 Cor. 5:7f.) though that is not a widely held view. After the feast, Paul, Luke, and whoever else still remained in their group joined those who had gone ahead. This time the journey by ship took five days contrasted with the two recorded in 16:11.

**20:7** On the first day of the week, Paul gathered with other believers to break bread, a tradition that apparently began soon after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Because he was leaving the next day (this event occurred at the end of his week in Troas), Paul spoke until midnight.

**20:9-10** Peter raised a disciple named Tabitha from the dead (9:36-41), and now Paul ostensibly did the same for Eutychus. It is not clear, however, whether Eutychus was actually dead or just unconscious. Paul's statement that his life is in him most naturally suggests Eutychus was alive. In that case picked up dead would mean he was unconscious and appeared dead.

**20:11** Despite the drama with Eutychus, the crowd went upstairs to break bread, eat together, and talk until dawn before Paul departed.

**20:13.** The narrative follows the events of those in the "we" group, who sailed from Troas to Assos, where they met Paul, who had traveled by land.

**20:15.** The group met in Assos, where Paul joined the ship, stopping at several ports before its arrival in Miletus. This verse ends the we section.

**20:16.** Paul appears to have consciously decided to sail past Ephesus in his hurry to get to Jerusalem for Pentecost. He may have wanted to avoid Ephesus because of the possibility that his presence would cause unrest (cp. 19:23-41). Also, he had close ties with the Ephesian church, and it might have been difficult to take leave of them if he had stopped in the city.