



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?**

- Looking back, what is one season of life that significantly shaped your faith—for better or for worse?

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Acts 20:1–16 together.

As you listen, pay attention to:

- Paul’s urgency and discernment
- His consistent commitment to encouragement
- The intentional way he orders his time and relationships

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Paul consistently strengthens believers, even while traveling.
- His journey involves careful planning and difficult decisions.
- Paul chooses purpose over convenience.
- Encouragement and presence are central to his leadership.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why do you think Paul prioritized encouraging believers during such a demanding season of his life?

Paul understood that perseverance in faith is strengthened through encouragement. Even as his responsibilities increased, he recognized that people—not efficiency—were central to God’s mission. Encouragement was a strategic investment in the long-term health of the church.

What does this passage teach us about discerning between *busy* and *faithful* living?

Paul was active but not aimless. His schedule served his calling rather than replacing it. Faithful living involves intentional alignment with God’s priorities, while busy living often reflects cultural pressure or self-driven urgency.

Paul was intentional about where he went—and where he didn’t. How does discernment shape wise decision-making today?

Discernment helps us say both “yes” and “no” faithfully. Paul avoided paths that would distract from his mission. Likewise, adults must evaluate opportunities not only by their appeal, but by whether they align with God’s direction and calling.

What challenges make it difficult for adults to slow down and invest in people?

Responsibilities, deadlines, fatigue, and the pace of modern life create constant urgency. Slowing down requires resisting the belief that productivity equals value and choosing relational presence over personal efficiency.

What distractions most commonly pull adults away from living with spiritual purpose?

Common distractions include over-commitment, career pressure, financial stress, digital noise, and comfort-driven decision-making. These are not inherently wrong, but they can quietly displace spiritual attentiveness if left unchecked.

How does Paul's willingness to adjust his travel plans challenge the way we hold our own plans and preferences?

Paul's flexibility reflects submission to God's greater purposes. Adults often cling tightly to routines and expectations. This passage challenges us to hold plans loosely, trusting God's redirection as an act of wisdom rather than inconvenience.

In what ways can encouragement be a form of spiritual leadership, even for those who don't hold formal leadership roles?

Encouragement strengthens faith, affirms calling, and builds resilience. Paul models leadership through presence and words, not position. Every believer influences others through intentional encouragement, making it a shared responsibility in the church.

What does "finishing well" look like in your current season of life, and what practices help move you toward that goal?

Finishing well looks different in each season, but always includes faithfulness, humility, and obedience. Practices such as prayer, Scripture engagement, accountability, and regular self-examination help sustain a long-term, Christ-centered life.

Paul demonstrates that **faithfulness is not accidental—it is cultivated through daily obedience**. Many adults assume faithfulness will happen naturally over time, but Scripture shows us that intentionality, discipline, and humility are required to finish well.

APPLICATION

Encourage group members to reflect and choose **one intentional action** this week:

- Be deliberate with time by creating margin for prayer, Scripture, or meaningful conversation.
- Offer encouragement to someone carrying spiritual or emotional weight.
- Evaluate one commitment or habit to determine whether it aligns with God's priorities.

This week, intentionally slow down in at least one interaction—listen fully, encourage sincerely, and be spiritually present. Reflect on how that moment shaped both you and the other person.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul's life reminds us that finishing well is not about speed or recognition—it is about **faithful obedience over time**. Our journey may look different, but the calling remains the same: to live with purpose, love people deeply, and follow Christ wholeheartedly. *Faithfulness today prepares us for endurance tomorrow.*

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 examine Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders—one of the most personal and instructive leadership moments in Acts. Paul reflects on his ministry, warns of coming challenges, and points to the kind of faith that endures beyond any one season or role.

We'll explore:

- What spiritual leadership looks like in practice
- How integrity sustains faith over time
- Why finishing well requires humility and vigilance

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray together for:

- **Wisdom to steward time and influence well**
- **Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading**
- **Our worship services**, that hearts would be prepared and God would be honored
- **Our church leadership and families**, that we would remain faithful in every season

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.