



LIFE Group Discussion Guide

February 1, 2026

Acts 20:17-38

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

Some conversations stay with us long after they end—words spoken at the close of a season, when clarity replaces urgency and what truly matters rises to the surface. In Acts 20:17–38, we are invited into one of those moments. Paul gathers the Ephesian elders not to celebrate success, defend his ministry, or outline future plans, but to testify to a life shaped by obedience to Christ.

Paul speaks with humility and honesty. He reminds them how he lived among them—with tears, endurance, courage, and unwavering commitment to the truth. He does not

minimize hardship or pretend the road was easy. Instead, he openly acknowledges suffering as part of faithful service. For Paul, obedience to God mattered more than comfort, safety, or personal reputation.

What makes this moment especially powerful is Paul's awareness that his time with them is ending. Knowing he may never see them again, he chooses his words carefully. He warns them of coming challenges, entrusts them to God's care, and models what it looks like to release control while remaining faithful. His confidence is not in strong leadership structures or personal influence, but in the grace of God and the power of the gospel.

This passage invites us to slow down and reflect on our own lives. If we were speaking at the close of a season—of leadership, parenting, vocation, or ministry—what would we emphasize? What would our lives reveal about what we truly value? Acts 20:17–38 challenges us to consider whether we are living in such a way that, when a season ends, we can point not to achievements, but to faithfulness.

- **When you think about legacy, who is someone whose faith or character has deeply influenced your life—and why?**

SCRIPTURE READING

Read Acts 20:17–38 together.

As you listen, note:

- Paul's description of his own life and ministry
- His warnings and encouragements to leaders
- His confidence in God despite uncertainty

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Paul reflects honestly on how he lived among the believers.
- He emphasizes humility, perseverance, and faithfulness amid hardship.
- Paul warns of future challenges and false teaching.
- He entrusts the church to God, not to himself.
- His farewell is marked by deep emotion, prayer, and unity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why do you think Paul begins by reminding the elders how he lived among them?

Paul points to his life as evidence of the message he preached. His credibility came not from position or authority, but from consistent character. By reminding them how he lived, Paul reinforces that spiritual leadership is rooted in integrity and example, not just words.

What stands out to you about Paul’s description of faithful ministry and leadership?

Paul emphasizes humility, perseverance, and sacrifice rather than success or recognition. He highlights tears, trials, and obedience, showing that faithful ministry often involves hardship. Leadership, in Paul’s view, is about serving Christ and others, not self-promotion.

Paul says he did not shrink back from declaring the whole counsel of God. Why is this important for spiritual maturity?

Spiritual maturity requires the full truth of God’s Word—not just what is encouraging or comfortable. By teaching the whole counsel of God, Paul ensured believers were grounded, prepared, and resilient. Avoiding hard truths weakens faith and leaves people unprepared for trials.

How do Paul’s warnings about future challenges apply to the church today?

Paul acknowledges that spiritual opposition and false teaching are inevitable. His warning reminds the church to remain alert, discerning, and rooted in truth. Faithfulness requires vigilance, sound teaching, and leaders who are willing to protect the spiritual health of the community.

What does it mean to “watch over” others spiritually in everyday life?

Watching over others involves care, accountability, prayer, and guidance. It’s not about control, but about love and responsibility. In everyday life, this can look like encouraging others, speaking truth graciously, and remaining attentive to spiritual needs within families, friendships, and the church.

Paul entrusts the church to God rather than trying to control outcomes. Why is this difficult for leaders—and for adults in general?

Releasing control challenges our desire for security and certainty. Leaders and adults often feel responsible for outcomes, but Paul models trust in God’s sovereignty. Entrusting others to God requires humility, faith, and confidence that God continues His work beyond our influence.

How does Paul’s example reshape our understanding of success and legacy?

Paul defines success as faithfulness, not visible results. His legacy is not built on achievements, but on obedience, integrity, and trust in God. This challenges cultural definitions of success and invites believers to measure their lives by spiritual fruit rather than external recognition.

What specific aspect of Paul’s life or words challenges you most in your current season?

This will vary by individual, but common challenges include Paul’s humility, willingness to suffer, commitment to truth, or ability to release control. The question invites personal reflection on where growth, surrender, or renewed obedience may be needed.

Paul's farewell reminds us that **faithfulness is measured by obedience, not outcomes**. He cannot control what happens after he leaves, but he can testify that he lived with integrity and courage. Mature faith releases control and trusts God to continue the work He began.

APPLICATION

Invite group members to reflect on **one intentional response** this week:

- Examine one area of life where integrity needs strengthening.
- Encourage or invest spiritually in someone God has placed under your influence.
- Pray for discernment to recognize and respond faithfully to spiritual challenges.
- Practice generosity with time, resources, or encouragement.

This week, take time to reflect privately: *If someone followed my life for a season, what would they learn about faith, priorities, and trust in God?* Ask God to reveal one area to strengthen.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul's farewell reminds us that a life surrendered to Christ leaves an impact long after a season ends. Finishing well is not about recognition—it is about **faithfulness, humility, and trust in God's ongoing work**.

A life anchored in Christ becomes a legacy that points others to Him.

LOOKING AHEAD

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

February 8, 2026 — Acts 21:1–16

Next week, we will follow Paul as he travels toward Jerusalem, fully aware that challenges and opposition await him. This passage highlights **faithful obedience, guidance from the Holy Spirit, and the cost of commitment**.

We'll explore:

- How Paul demonstrates trust in God despite uncertainty
- The importance of spiritual discernment when making major decisions
- The role of community support and prophecy in God's guidance

Consider the areas in your life where God is calling you to step forward, even if the outcome is unclear. How can you follow faithfully, like Paul, while remaining sensitive to God's guidance?

PRAYER FOCUS

Spend time praying for:

- **Faithfulness and integrity** in every season of life
- **Wisdom and discernment** for spiritual leadership
- **Our worship services**, that God would be honored and His Word proclaimed clearly
- **Our church leaders and families**, that they would remain vigilant and humble

COMMENTARY

Acts 20:17-38

20:17. In this verse the leaders of the church in Ephesus are called elders, but they are referred to as “overseers” in verse 28. These terms designate a functional and formal title of church leadership. The Ephesian church appears to have had a formal leadership structure.

20:18-35. This speech differs from Paul’s others in Acts. It is the only one delivered to a group of believers, and it has several parallels with themes in the Pauline letters—reference to his serving the Lord, his persecution, his not shrinking from teaching, his ministry to both Jews and Greeks, the need for repentance, counting his life expendable, and finishing the course.

20:20-21. The mark of a truly faithful teacher of the gospel is that he or she does not shrink back from topics that, though unpopular or personally difficult, are profitable for disciples. Paul’s message to both Jews and Greeks called for repentance toward God for one’s sins and faith in the Lord Jesus. This is an excellent summary of the mission of the church.

20:22-23. Paul was undaunted by the God-given knowledge that chains and afflictions awaited him. His persistence in teaching despite this is a model for all Christian disciples.

20:24. Paul put his trials in perspective by declaring that he counted his life of no value. What was important was that he would finish the course that had been set for him by the Lord Jesus, which involved testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

20:25. Either Paul realized that things might go badly for him in Jerusalem, or he had no intention of returning to this part of the Mediterranean. His intention after visiting Jerusalem was to head to Rome and beyond. This is why he declared to the Ephesian elders that he would not see any of them again (v. 38).

20:26-27. Paul declared that he was innocent of everyone’s blood because he had declared the whole plan of God to them. This means he had been faithful to proclaim

the plan of salvation, including the coming judgment. Thus no one could accuse him of failing to warn them.

20:28. Paul used the language of shepherding to describe the responsibility of the leaders of the Ephesian church. Here they are called overseers rather than elders, appointed by the Holy Spirit for their task. Reference here to redemption through the blood of Jesus is unique in Acts, but the language reflects Paul's statements elsewhere (Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 2:13).

20:29-30. Paul clearly did not regard incorrect doctrine as unimportant. He called false teachers savage wolves because eternity hangs in the balance of rightly understanding the gospel.

20:31. Paul described his three years of active ministry in Ephesus as times of constant vigilance, warning, and deep concern. The events recorded in Acts fit this description well.

20:32. Paul committed the Ephesian Christians to God's grace, which strengthens disciples in their earthly tasks and provides eternal inheritance to the sanctified—those made holy by God.

20:33-38. Paul was never motivated by money or renown, as proven by his labors that provided for his own needs and those who accompanied him. Jesus' saying, It is more blessed to give than to receive, is found only here. It resembles some of Jesus' sayings elsewhere (Luke 6:38). Jesus obviously said much more than is recorded in the Gospels (John 20:30-31; 21:25).