



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

Have you ever had to say goodbye to someone you really care about? It can be awkward, emotional, or even scary. In Acts 20:17–38, Paul is saying goodbye to the leaders in Ephesus—and it's a big deal. He's not talking about small stuff like how to organize events; he's talking about **how to live faithfully for God**, even when it's hard. Paul doesn't brag about what he's done. Instead, he reminds them—and us—what really matters: **living with integrity, loving people well, and trusting God no matter what happens next**. Even though he knows his time with them is ending, Paul focuses on helping them finish strong and stay faithful.

This passage makes us ask: *If someone watched my life this week, what would they see about what I really care about?*

Have you ever had to say goodbye to someone in a way that felt really important? How did it feel, and what did you learn from it?

SCRIPTURE

Read Acts 20:17–38 together.

Ask students to notice:

- How Paul talks about his life and ministry
- His advice for the leaders
- His trust in God, even when the future is uncertain

KEY OBSERVATIONS

- Paul models honesty and humility—he doesn't pretend life was easy.
- Leadership is about service, not recognition.
- Faithfulness sometimes comes with hard choices and sacrifices.
- Paul entrusts the church to God instead of trying to control everything.
- Saying goodbye can be a chance to encourage and strengthen others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why do you think Paul talks about his own life before giving advice?

Paul wants the elders to see that he practices what he preaches. Teens can learn that actions speak louder than words—our lives show what we truly believe.

What stands out to you about how Paul defines a “faithful life”?

Faithfulness means being honest, serving others, and staying committed to God even when it's hard. It's not about being popular or having an easy life.

Paul didn't avoid hard truths. Why is it important to hear the whole story, even when it's tough?

Knowing the truth prepares us for challenges and helps us make smart choices. Avoiding hard stuff might feel easier but can leave us unprepared.

What challenges do you see in your life that could make staying faithful difficult?

School pressure, peer influence, social media, or fear of being different. Teens face distractions and can be tempted to take shortcuts or compromise values.

What does it mean to “watch over” or care for others in your everyday life?

It means paying attention to friends, encouraging them, helping them make good choices, and praying for them—showing love through action, not just words.

Paul trusted God with the future instead of trying to control it himself. How hard is that for you to do, and why?

It's hard because we like knowing the outcome and feeling safe. Paul shows that trusting God is better than worrying—He knows the future and can guide us.

How does Paul's example change the way you think about success or leaving a legacy?

Success isn't about being popular, winning awards, or being noticed—it's about faithfulness, helping others, and staying true to God.

Which part of Paul's life or words really challenges you this week?

Answers will vary—could be his courage, honesty, willingness to suffer, or commitment to serving others. Encourage teens to reflect and take one step this week to live it out.

Paul's farewell shows that **faithfulness is bigger than comfort, popularity, or results**. He knew he couldn't control the future, but he lived in a way that left a lasting impact. Teenagers can learn from this by choosing to be honest, faithful, and encouraging, even when it's not easy or "cool."

APPLICATION

What is one situation in your life right now where you need to trust God—even though the outcome feels uncertain or uncomfortable?

Who is one person God has placed in your life (friend, leader, parent, coach) that you can listen to or lean on when making a tough faith decision this week?

Choose **one thing** to do this week:

- Encourage someone who might need it—text, note, or talk in person.
- Be honest about a struggle and ask God for help in staying faithful.
- Look at your week and decide: which priorities really reflect what matters to God?

Ask the students to identify one situation this week where they can show faithfulness, integrity, or encouragement—even if it's uncomfortable—and do it. Be ready to share what happened next week.

PRAYER FOCUS

Pray together for:

- **Strength to stay faithful**, even when it's hard or unpopular
- **Courage to encourage others** and speak truth in love
- **Our church and worship services**, that everyone feels welcomed and inspired
- **Friends and family**, that God would help us live lives that matter

CLOSING THOUGHT

Paul reminds us that finishing well isn't about being the most popular or successful—it's about **staying faithful, loving others, and trusting God**. Even in hard goodbyes, we can leave an impact that lasts.

Your life can point others to God—one choice, one action, one word at a time.

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'll follow Paul as he travels toward Jerusalem, even though he knows challenges and danger are ahead. This passage is all about **trusting God when the path is uncertain** and relying on friends and community to help guide and encourage us along the way.

We'll talk about:

- How Paul trusts God's plan, even when it's risky
- Listening to God and the advice of wise people
- How friends and mentors can help us stay faithful

Think about a time when God might be calling you to step forward, even if it feels scary or uncertain. How can you trust Him and rely on the people He's placed in your life for guidance and encouragement?

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).