

BGCC Community Group Guide



Acts: Living The Mission

June 7th, 2026

Farewell To Friends

Acts 20:17-32

Section 1 – Authentic Faithful Leadership

Acts 20:17-21

“You know how I lived the whole time I was with you... I served the Lord with great humility and with tears.”

Summary

As Paul gathers the Ephesian elders for what will likely be their final meeting, he begins by reminding them not simply of what he taught, but how he lived. His ministry was not hidden behind a platform or a title. These leaders had seen his daily life, his struggles, his sacrifices, and even his tears. Paul's credibility came from a life that matched his message.

One of the striking themes in this passage is humility. In a culture that valued status, power, and honor, Paul points to humility as a mark of faithful leadership. He was willing to be known, willing to be vulnerable, and willing to let people see both his strengths and weaknesses. As the theologian Augustine once wrote, *“It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.”*

Paul also reminds them that he never hesitated to proclaim the truth. He shared the gospel publicly and privately, from house to house and in personal conversations. His goal was not simply to win arguments or pass along information but to see lives transformed through repentance and faith in Christ. As Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:17).

Faithful leadership is not about appearing perfect. It is about faithfully following Christ and inviting others to do the same.

Group Question

What stands out most about Paul's description of his ministry: his humility, his authenticity, or his commitment to speak the truth? Why?

Personal Relevance

Most of us influence more people than we realize. Whether in our homes, workplaces, friendships, or church, people are constantly learning from our example. The question is not whether we are leading, but what kind of leadership we are demonstrating.

Paul's life challenges us to move beyond simply looking spiritual and instead pursue genuine faithfulness. People rarely connect with perfection, but they often connect with honesty, humility, and a sincere dependence on Christ.

Flow Question

What is the difference between appearing spiritually mature and actually walking closely with Jesus?

Reflection Question

If the people closest to you described your faith based on what they observe in your daily life, what would they say?

Section 2 – Running God's Race

Acts 20:22-27

“My only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.”

Summary

Paul knows hardship awaits him in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit has repeatedly warned him that suffering lies ahead. Yet Paul remains focused. His greatest concern is not comfort, safety, or success. His greatest concern is faithfulness.

Throughout Scripture, God's people are often described as runners in a race. Jesus “set his face” toward Jerusalem knowing the cross awaited Him (Luke 9:51). The writer of Hebrews encourages believers to “run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1). Paul sees his life through this same lens. He has been given a mission, and he intends to finish it.

Notice that Paul identifies his task specifically as “testifying to the good news of God's grace.” His race was not merely about enduring hardship. It was about making Christ known. The gospel was too precious to keep to himself.

The Moravian missionary Nikolaus Zinzendorf famously said, “*Preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten.*” While the wording may sound severe, the point is powerful: our lives are ultimately about Christ, not ourselves.

Each believer has a unique path to walk. Different responsibilities, different relationships, different opportunities. Yet every Christian shares the same calling—to faithfully represent Jesus wherever He has placed us.

Group Question

What do you think most threatens Christians from finishing their race well today?

Personal Relevance

Many people begin well but struggle to persevere when life becomes difficult. Disappointment, fear, comfort, distraction, and busyness can slowly pull us away from God's mission. We also begin to doubt ourselves under duress. Why would God allow such hardship to fall on us?

Paul reminds us that faithfulness often requires endurance. The goal is not simply to avoid failure but to continue moving forward with Christ. Sometimes that means sharing our faith when it feels uncomfortable. Sometimes it means remaining obedient when obedience is costly.

As Charles Spurgeon wrote, “*By perseverance the snail reached the ark.*” God often accomplishes His purposes through ordinary believers who simply keep walking with Him.

Flow Question

What helps a believer stay focused on God's calling when life becomes difficult or distracting?

Reflection Question

Who has God placed in your life right now that may need to hear about His grace through your words or actions?

Section 3 – Watching Over Your Soul and Caring for God's People

Acts 20:28-38

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”

Summary

As Paul reaches the heart of his farewell, he gives one final charge: watch yourselves. Before these leaders can effectively care for others, they must first care for their own spiritual health.

This instruction is remarkably practical. Paul understands that some of the greatest dangers facing the church do not come from outside opposition but from within. False teaching, compromised character, selfish ambition, and spiritual neglect can quietly undermine both leaders and churches.

For that reason, Paul continually points them back to God's Word and God's grace. The gospel is not merely the way we begin the Christian life; it is the way we continue growing throughout it. God's Word builds us up, corrects us, strengthens us, and keeps our hearts anchored in truth.

Paul also reminds the elders that the church does not ultimately belong to them. It belongs to Christ, who purchased it with His own blood. Every person we influence—our children, spouses, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and fellow church members—ultimately belongs to Him.

As J. C. Ryle observed, *“The best of men are only men at their very best.”* We cannot shepherd others from our own strength. We must remain dependent upon Christ.

Group Question

Why do you think Paul tells the elders to watch over themselves before watching over others?

Personal Relevance

Many believers spend tremendous energy trying to help others while neglecting their own walk with God. Yet healthy influence flows from a healthy relationship with Christ.

Watching over ourselves means regularly examining our hearts, remaining grounded in Scripture, confessing sin, seeking accountability, and staying close to Jesus. It is not selfish; it is essential.

The people around us do not need perfect examples. They need examples of people who continually return to Christ and depend on Him.

Flow Question

What are some practical ways Christians can guard their spiritual health in the middle of busy lives?

Reflection Question

What area of your walk with God needs greater attention right now: time in Scripture, prayer, humility, repentance, community, or obedience?

Conclusion

Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders is more than a goodbye speech. It is a picture of a life well lived.

He lived with humility rather than pride.

He spoke the truth rather than remaining silent.

He ran his race with perseverance rather than quitting when hardship came.

He cared for God's people because he first cared for his own walk with God.

At the center of it all stands Jesus. Paul could pour out his life because Christ had first poured out His life for him. The gospel was not merely Paul's message; it was his motivation.

As we leave this study, consider these three questions:

1. Am I walking humbly with Christ?
2. Am I faithfully speaking about Christ?

3. Am I persevering in the race Christ has given me?

One day, every believer will reach their own Acts 20 moment. The question will not be how successful, comfortable, or admired we became. The question will be whether we remained faithful to Jesus.

May we be able to say with Paul:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)

And may God's grace give us strength to finish well.