

Acts 20:17-38

5 Values of a Faithful Missionary

Image Church // Missions Focus Weekend 6/6/2021

Introduction

The wait is finally over! *Can we just put our hands together and celebrate that!*

This week we received confirmation from both Cobb County Schools and ECMS, that we're now allowed back to gathering at ECMS and so we're going to make it happen!

Let me just say, this is incredible news as we continue to come out of the fog of COVID, we get the chance to move toward normal again as a church Which is incredible!

For those of you that are new with us- and there's a lot of you, we launched as a church in a space at Life University- we had outgrown that space and made a big move to ECMS- which is a brand-new school that's centrally located, and that had an incredible environment to better accommodate us...

And we met there for ***one Sunday*** and then we got a call the following Thursday letting us know that we could no longer meet there due to the sudden increase and impact of COVID...

And so, as a church we pivoted to a digital platform, and then from there we adapted doing the best we could to gather in the spaces that were open and available... And now we finally have the chance to go back to where we were pre-COVID!!!

Family this is a huge step forward for us, I want you to know how excited I am about this and the days ahead in the life of Image Church! And I want to say to you, thank you! Thank you for your faithfulness through an incredible difficult season...

We had a lot of unique obstacles to work through and overcome, and through it all you have been incredibly faithful...

I believe that God has done a work in us and through us as a church, not to mention all of the new folks that have gotten connected during all of this! Be encouraged church family, we have some great days ahead!

So, here's the deal, **we're going to be transitioning back to ECMS on June 27th**!

Yes, that's in **3 weeks**, because we want to get back to this incredible space that we were in before all of the craziness!

And listen, just like before, we're going to be going back to **ONE SERVICE** again! The auditorium at ECMS has individual seating that can hold **450 people** so there's plenty of room for us there and for those of you that want to/need to continue social distancing you will have plenty of room!

Now, I know some of you are wondering what this means for us as it relates to our search for permanency in the city...

- This changes nothing as it relates to that! We are not letting up, it has been, and will continue to be a top priority for us!
- This ***transition back to ECMS*** helps in this process, we want to have a healthy runway to help us get to a sustainable and healthy normal! ECMS gives us the chance to do that together!
- But know we have been on the hunt, and we've been working on a solid lead and I will be keeping you posted...

Some exciting days ahead!!

Well, if you have your Bibles, you can go ahead and turn to Acts chapter 20...

We're going to do something a little different today, I'm going to step away from our series in Luke and we're going to look at another book Luke wrote- which is the book of Acts...

This weekend is a **missions emphasis weekend**, I've told you before that we have **4 core values** here at Image Church- these values help keep us oriented around our God given purpose, which is **to love God, love each other and live on mission...**

And one of those 4 core values is **missional living**, in fact one of the things we say around here is that **every member is a missionary**- and so *it's important that we take specific weekends to specifically highlight missions in different ways...*

- We've seen in our Inverted Kingdom series that we've been sent, but today I want to give you some biblical values that help us actually live sent...

To do that, we're going to be looking at the life of one of the best missionaries to every live, Paul. And what I'm going to do is hold up **5 values that Paul lived by as a faithful missionary**, and I want this to serve as a model for us as a church as we key in on what it looks like to be faithful missionaries...

Let me give you a little background from where we're going to be picking up here in **Acts chapter 20...**

Paul had been in Ephesus for around **3 years** but he's about to head out to Jerusalem and then to Rome, where he assumes that he's going to be martyred...

So, he calls together all the church leaders for what he thinks is will be his **final farewell speech**, this is a powerful moment... And what we're

going to see is that Paul is going to lay out a **summary** of his mission and his values...

Side note: This is the only extended speech in all of Acts that's made **specifically to Christians**, all of the other speeches and sermons that are recorded were made to unbelievers... That's important because I believe, this text points us to how God wants **all** Christians to live their lives...¹

Acts 20:17-38

Let's pick up in verse 17... 17 [Paul] sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the church. 18 When they came to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with tears, and during the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews.

Ok, the first thing that we need to see is this:

1. Paul served the Lord faithfully with humility (v.19)

Humility- The opposite of proud and arrogant... It's thinking of yourself the appropriately in light of who God is and what God's done for you through Jesus...

Paul in humility didn't make life about him, he didn't make it about building his kingdom, he made it about building God's Kingdom...

Paul was willing to do whatever it took to point people to Jesus, because he cared more about them hearing and experiencing the gospel more than anything else even if it made his own life more difficult...

- Their need for the gospel took place above his desire for comfort...

Paul humbled himself in all areas of his life for the sake of the gospel, he took a back seat...

¹ JD Greear, Sermon. *Six Characteristics of a successful life*. Acts 20:17-38, The whole Story Series #41

- **Example:** sitting in the backseat on the hump... Paul sat on the hump...

And when you take the *back-seat* things can get uncomfortable... What we see here is that Paul's life was uncomfortable... **Tears and trials... Jews still can't figure it out!**

Paul was willing to **faithfully** endure tears and trials because he recognized what Jesus faithfully endured for him...

Paul experienced difficult times, but that was OK because he realized that his purpose wasn't comfort, success or fame, it was pointing people to Jesus!

Is that true for you? Are you living a life of **faithful humility** seeing yourself rightly before God and being about his Kingdom and viewing the need others have for the gospel like Paul?

- You willing to go wherever He tells you to go and do what He's called you to do??
- Are you open handed with your life in light of God's Kingdom and the need for...
- Are you willing to travel like Paul?
- Are you willing to endure trials and tears for the sake of the gospel??

Let's keep reading ...

Verse 20 You know that I did not avoid proclaiming to you anything that was profitable or from teaching you publicly and from house to house.

BTW: here's something you need to notice, look at where Paul taught them...

He did this in **public** and in **homes**

- We get a look into how the church functioned
- For us: Corporate gathering "here" and Community Groups...

Are you committed to those 2 environments like Paul?

Then Paul says:

21 I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.

We have to stop here to see the second thing we need to see, we can't miss this very important piece:

2. Paul preached a multiethnic gospel (v. 21)

Preached gospel to all people without distinction, he recognized that the gospel is for all people... **Praise God otherwise we were busted!**

Let me ask you this, **do you believe the gospel is for all people?** *If your answer is yes, are you living a life that reflects that?*

Listen, for **Paul to preach a multiethnic gospel he had to live a multiethnic life** engaging and perusing people who are different, but that shared the same need for the gospel!

This is important on a **local** level and on an **international** level!

- **Local:**
 - Paul preached a message a gospel that brought people across different ethnic and cultural bringing together... We want to be about the same thing...
 - The gospel is the only thing that can truly bring together people who are different...
 - And when that happens we get an incredible display of unity that reflects what God is about...
 - We also get a better taste of who God is through the different cultural perspectives that different **Image Bearers bring!**
 - We **never** get to a place as a church where we say that the gospel is for all people but our church looks like it's for one type of people!

Listen, a church we don't peruse this because it's trendy we peruse this because we believe it is biblical and it's what the gospel should compel us to do, just like it did Paul...

Internationally:

- We want the multiethnic gospel Paul preaches to compel us to the ends of the earth as well...
 - **3.2 Billion** people have never heard the gospel!
- We want to be intentional to take the gospel to the nations
 - **Matthew 28:19-20** – Go and makes disciples of all nations...
 - **Acts 1:8**... Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth...
- Through sending long term and partnering in short term...
- Paul was willing to travel for the sake of the gospel... He was compelled to take it outside his own people group, are you??

To put this in play you have to live out value 1: humility... You have to see the supremacy of God's Kingdom in your life and you have to see the need of others who've not heard as greater than your desire to stay comfortable...

- Locally or internationally...

Don't say you believe a multiethnic gospel and then live a monoethnic life...

Let's Keep reading:

Verse 22: "And now I am on my way to Jerusalem, compelled by the Spirit, not knowing what I will encounter there, **23** except that in every town the Holy Spirit warns me that chains and afflictions are waiting for me. **24** But I consider my life of no value to myself; my purpose is to finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace."

This part is problematic for the **prosperity guys**, see the prosperity gospel teaches that Jesus is for your personal gain- for health, wealth and the good life... Where you're the hero and Jesus is your means for success...

But that's **not** what the **Bible** teaches and it's **not** what Paul believed... See, Paul understood that the gospel wasn't a call to success, it was a call to life surrender...

The Gospel that the Bible teaches is that you are **sinful and wicked**, separated from a perfect and Holy God, and there is nothing that you can do to change that, but God in the midst of our sin and rebellion sent Jesus to come and live the sinless life that we were supposed to live, but then die a sinner's death that was meant for us...

But then He beats death, giving us hope of new life in Him for those that would believe... And when you trust in Jesus you get a complete new identity, one that isn't based on what you did, but based on what Christ has done in your place!

When you receive the gift of forgiveness that Jesus offers it changes everything because **you realized what you've been given, and what you've been saved from**...

Paul's didn't consider his life **valuable** to himself, he saw his life as something to **steward** and **leverage** for the most valuable thing- **Jesus!**

That's that **foundation** that enabled Paul to be **certain** of his course, or his *race* that he was running... He was running after Jesus!

- Paul wanted to Jesus, and He wanted to finish with Jesus welcoming Him home!

The third thing that we need to see:

3. Paul wanted to finish well (v. 22-24)

At some point you're going to finish life- *last time I checked the death rate in America was right around 100%...*

The question is, **how will you finish life??**

How do you want to finish life? Do you have the same desire Paul does? Do you want to head into eternity knowing that stewarded the time God gave you leveraging all you had for him?

Example: Sprinting as a kid- my dad would always say run past the finish line- run to the hat... So, I would look past the finish line to the hat, I would look on that hat...

- You have to have your eye on the right thing to really finish well...

Same is true in the Christian life... We're not running to the same finish line as everyone else we have a different goal...

Like Paul you've been given a ministry and it's advancing the message and ministry of Jesus... **2 Corinthians 5:18-20**

Finishing well means that your aim... I don't know what you will encounter, it may mean that chains and afflictions await you, **but it's all worth is when you know the prize at the end of the race- Jesus...**

Some of you of you have been running after the wrong things- your allowing the things of the world (money, success, comfort) to dictate your life more than Jesus and the ministry He's given you...

- Would you remember Jesus- would you look to Him!!

Others of you that are being tempted to quit today, to quit sharing the gospel with your friend, to quit living for Jesus because it has gotten hard... FINISH, Finish!!!

Hebrews 12:1-2 "Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, **2** keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Let's keep reading... **Verse 25**

25 "And now I know that none of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will ever see me again. **26** Therefore I declare to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, **27** because I did not avoid declaring to you the whole plan of God."

28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. **29** I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. **30** Men will rise up even from your own number and distort the truth to lure the disciples into following them. **31** Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I never stopped warning each one of you with tears.

Here is the fourth thing that we need to see from Paul's life:

4. Paul was faithful to preach the gospel and invest in the church (v.25-31)

Paul says that he did not avoid declaring the whole gospel and because of that he is "**innocent of their blood**" ...

That sounds strange right? But you have to see this, Paul feels the burden that, if he doesn't share the gospel with them, that he shares in some way the guilt of their condemnation.²

- **Example** if I had a cure and didn't give it to you...

Paul views this message as life and death, he sees that there's an eternity at stake!

Do you understand what's at stake?!?! And do you understand that God's plan is **you** through the power of the Holy Spirit?!? Do you feel the weight of that??

This is why we want to plant churches this is why we want to send you our every week as a missionary to your context...

This is why the **multiethnic gospel** of the bible goes beyond local to international... Because of what's at stake for those who've not heard...

² Spence Shelton, Sermon: Yearbooks, dreams and Jesus. July 6, 2014.

Let me ask you this, how many people around you haven't heard the gospel?? How many people would point to you and say guilty of not sharing it with me??

How many people internationally would point to the church in America who have the message and the means to get to them and say guilty of not sharing it with us?!?

- With receiving the gospel comes a weighty responsibility!

And, not only was Paul faithful to teach the gospel with boldness, *but he invested in the church...*

Look at how Paul talks about the church and how Paul was invested in the church...

- The church was purchased by Christ's blood
- He had invested so heavily that in **verse 29** he says watch out for when I leave... and then in **verse 31** he says he was invested for 3 years- pleading them with tears...

I know your role is different than Paul's, and even the elders who he instructs in here, but look at how invested he was in this local at Ephesus church during the time he was there... Look at the way he regards the church with such high value...

- Paul was not a **casual attender**, he was deeply invested...

Are you invested in the local church?

- You have to see that the church isn't some kind of **event** that you attend when it fits your schedule, it is something you devote your life to... It is a group of people, living life together on mission, not a country club for Christians...

Example: If you walked out to your car today and there was a hand lying next to your door... **THERE IS A PROBLEM**

- Not only can the hand not function alone, but the body can't function the same without the hand...

- The Bible teaches the Church is the Body of Christ... If you are not connected you are like that hand...

Are you connected to and engaged in a local body? Some of you need to be sowed back on the local body this morning!

Jump down to **verse 35** and let's look at how Paul closes out his speech...

35 In every way I've shown you that it is necessary to help the weak by laboring like this and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, because he said, **'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**

Here is the last thing that we need to see from this passage:

5. Paul gave more than he took (v. 33-35)

Paul understood what Jesus had done for him... How Jesus gave everything for him... So he gave everything in response...

Do you realize what Jesus has done for you? Do you understand what He gave up so that you could have life?

- We respond by giving what we have because of what he gave for us... **Is that true for you?**

In your generosity with your time, talent, and treasure?

- Do you look at your job as a means to "get" or to give?
- Are you using giving of the talents that the Lord has given you?
- Do you give your time more for yourself or for others?

Is your life more characterized by giving or receiving??

Conclusion [VAMP]

So that's it, that the outline for what it looks like to live as a faithful missionary...

1. **Serve the Lord faithfully with humility (v.19)**

2. **Preach a multiethnic gospel (v. 21)**
3. **Finish well (v. 22-24)**
4. **Be faithful to teach the gospel and invest in the church (v.25-31)**
5. **Give more than you take (v.33-35)**

Would these be the things that Characterize us... Would you see these things as markers for your purpose in this life...

Talk about how to apply these to your life- you start with the gospel...

- Take a step forward in at least one of these places as you respond to the gospel...

Appeal to non-Christian

There are some of you that would claim that you are a Christian, and yet you're not living out, or even perusing any of the same values that Paul laid out for us...

- That's probably because for you, Christianity is just a religion, it's an event that you attend on the weekend...

Others of you need to be reminded of your purpose... Fix your eyes on Jesus and run, finish well falling into the arms of Jesus...

Let me pray for us...