



Community Group Discussion Guide

Go Therefore: Acts 20:2-21:17 – Sep 19, 2021

I. Starter Questions:

- How has the Lord grown your faith grown in the last several years? And, how are you praying to grow in the coming years?
- What deep relationships have been especially precious to you in your life, that have come to a tearful and joyful parting of ways?

II. Discussion of Scripture:

Context: This week Luke continues his narrative of Paul's third missionary journey.

Acts 20:2-6 (ESV)

Paul in Macedonia and Greece

² When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³ There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵ These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶ but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

Discussion Questions:

1. **What are the reasons behind all of Paul's travels?**
2. We see here how Paul had a great network of people supporting his ministry in the various regions in which he planted churches.
 - a. **How was Paul supported here?**
 - b. **How else has Paul been supported in Acts so far?**
 - c. **How can we support those in ministry leadership (elders, staff, leaders) at HHBC?**
 - d. **What does a *lack* of support look like?**

Acts 20:7-16 (ESV)

Eutychus Raised from the Dead

⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹ And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed,

for his life is in him.”¹¹ And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed.¹² And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted.

¹³ But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land.¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and went to Mitylene.¹⁵ And sailing from there we came the following day opposite Chios; the next day we touched at Samos; and the day after that we went to Miletus.¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Discussion Questions:

3. In verse 7, we see the first concrete record of believers gathering on the first of the week.
 - a. **What are the benefits of gathering together?**
 - b. **Why on the first of the week?**
4. Paul preached until midnight (v. 7); **why would the believers here have gathered at night?**
5. In verse 9 meet Eutychus, whose name means “lucky.”
 - a. **What happens in verses 9-10?**
 - b. **Was Eutychus lucky?**
 - c. It’s said that Luke, the author of Acts, wouldn’t have devoted space to this incident if Paul was merely lifting Eutychus up who was already alive. No, Paul restored him to life. **Why would it be important for Luke to write about Eutychus?**
6. We know that Paul is very affectionate toward the church in Ephesus (see also the next passage).
 - a. **Why then did Paul “sail past Ephesus” (v. 16)?** (He had so many close relationships there, he knew it would slow him down toward his goal of making it to Jerusalem by Pentecost.)
 - b. **Have you “sailed past Ephesus” in your life?**

Acts 20:17-36 (ESV)

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia,¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the

ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Discussion Questions:

7. Paul writes that he “did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable” (v. 20) and that he “did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God” (v. 27).
 - a. **What is it mean “to shrink”?**
 - b. **What are some of the fears that rise in you when it comes to sharing the gospel with others?**
 - c. **Why should we not fear?**
8. Paul describes his life’s mission in verse 24.
 - a. **How does Paul describe his mission?**
 - b. **What is your mission?**
 - c. **Our church’s mission?**
9. **What does Paul mean in verse 26 when he says that he is “innocent of the blood of all?”** (Paul is saying that he isn’t accountable for those in the Ephesian church any longer because he has confidence that he has communicated the “whole counsel of God” to them (v. 27) In other words, he didn’t omit any part of the message of the gospel with them. Paul is like the watchman blowing the trumpet in Ezekiel 33:1-6 that has completed his responsibility in warning the people of the “sword coming upon the land” (Ez. 33:3); those who “[hear] the sound of the trumpet and [do] not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself” (Ez. 33:5).)
10. Paul uses the shepherd metaphor in verse 28 to explain the critical role the elders play. They are shepherds, overseeing the health of their flock. The elders are to be vigilant, paying careful attention to both *themselves* and the *flock*.
 - a. **In Scripture, the ordering of things is usually significant—why would Paul exhort the elders to vigilance over themselves, first?**

- b. **What specifically are they to pay careful attention to?** (Pay attention to their own spiritual purity, toward personal holiness. Elders are to watch themselves, that sin wouldn't enter and distort their faith, and therefore be "drawn away" (v. 30))
 - c. **How much of the flock should be watched over (v. 28)?**
 - d. **Why would Paul specifically say "all the flock" (v. 28) and not just "the flock"?** (Elders are to care for the strong, and the weak. The seemingly significant, and the seemingly insignificant. The healthy, and the sick. The men, and the women. The adults, and the children. The young, and the old. James 2:1-7 describes the "sin of partiality" that Paul is exhorting against here, in a single word.)
 - e. Verses 28-31 are summarized by John Piper to say that "the church is always a threatened church." Paul knows that after he leaves, that "fierce wolves will come in among you" and that "from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things." Wolves both *enter into*, and *arise from*, the elders and the flock—and it is *inevitable*. In the face of inevitability, Paul bookends his exhortation the same way as before: "Therefore, be alert" (v. 31).
 - i. **Do you feel like careful attention is being given to you by our elders? Do you feel known and protected? How can you be better shepherded?**
 - ii. **In what ways have you seen wolves enter into and arise from the wider Church, and even at Henderson Hills? And, conversely, how have you seen a vigilant protection from wolves?**
11. Paul made a point to explain what his motive *wasn't*: "I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel" (v. 33)
- a. **Why would he explain that money and possessions weren't his motivation?**
 - b. **What was Paul's motivation?**
 - c. **Why does the pursuit of money and things so easily become our motivation?**
12. Paul quotes Jesus: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v. 35). While this isn't recorded in the Gospels, it is recorded here for us. It speaks of a posture of generosity that believers should assume—one that seeks the blessing from giving rather than receiving.
- a. The context of this quote is Paul's example of "working hard." **Can work be hard and joyful?**
 - b. **How have you experienced the higher blessing of giving?**
 - c. **Who do you know who lives by these words—that it's more blessed to give than to receive?**
13. **What can we learn about Paul's affection for those in the church? (vv. 36-38)**
- a. **Was Paul's love for the elders a superficial one, or a deep one? How do you cultivate deep affection like this?**
 - b. **Who do you share your life with?**

Acts 21:1-17 (ESV)

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

¹ And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ² And having found a ship crossing to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ And having sought out the disciples, we stayed there for seven days. And through the Spirit they were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. ⁵ When our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey, and they all, with wives and children, accompanied us until we were outside the city. And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed ⁶ and said farewell to one another. Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home.

⁷ When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day. ⁸ On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters, who prophesied. ¹⁰ While we were staying for many days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

¹⁵ After these days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ And some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us, bringing us to the house of Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge.

Paul Visits James

¹⁷ When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly.

Discussion Questions:

14. In Acts 20:22-24, Paul says that he is "bound by the Spirit" to travel to Jerusalem, despite the hardships that he knows await him there. Then, here, in Acts 21:4, it says that "through the Spirit [the disciples] were telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem."
 - a. **Are these conflicting messages from the Spirit?** (No. The most likely circumstance here is that Paul and the disciples are both hearing the same thing through the Spirit: Paul is to go to Jerusalem, and "imprisonment and afflictions await" (Acts 20:23). So, Paul is ready to suffer, but the disciples don't want to see him suffer. See also Acts 21:12-13.)
15. **What was Paul's response to the disciples' plea that he not go to Jerusalem?** (vv. 12-13)
16. **We've seen many examples of hospitality in these today's two chapters—what are they?**
 - a. **Why is hospitality demonstrated to be so important? What purpose does it serve?**
 - b. **Is it easy or hard for you to show hospitality? What makes it hard sometimes?**

III. Responding in Prayer:

- Pray for our friends and family members who continue to grapple with the effects of Covid. Pray for those who are sick, pray for our healthcare workers who are going above and beyond, pray for our teachers, and pray for our students—all of whom are dealing with constant change.
- Pray for our church, as we, by God's grace, pursue the mission that we believe God has called us to. And, because the church is always a threatened church, pray that we stay vigilant of Satan's attacks so we might continue on in equipping one another to love Jesus and live sent. Pray that through this hard work we would see the joyful blessing in it.
- Pray as we continue to push outside our walls. Pray for our teams as we plan and mobilize to assist with the hurricane efforts. Praise God, also, that in His power He is bringing the nations to us! Pray for our Afghan brothers and sisters as they make their way here. Pray that we begin a good work here to show loving hospitality to them in the short- and long-term. Pray for God's glory to shine in it all!