

Acts 20:7-38

Wrapping Up Loose Ends

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the cost that comes with following Christ—it can take us places we don't want to go or require sacrifice, but God calls us to follow the promptings of the Spirit, regardless.
- Discuss examples of how God is bigger than our circumstances—whether illness, death, or life direction, we can hold onto hope knowing that He is powerful and faithful. He will guide us, offer us courage, and give us peace and hope, whatever path we're called to walk.

? Icebreaker: What's something that you've put off recently that you want to get done soon?

Read Out Loud: Acts 20:7-12 (NIV)

⁷On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. ⁹Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. ¹⁰Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" ¹¹Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. ¹²The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

What's In A Name?

According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, Eutychus' name means "Happy" or "Fortunate." How does that strike you?

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/eutychus>

Discussion Questions

? Paul knew God had the power to bring Eutychus back to life. Why do you think he believed this miracle could happen?

Possible Answers: Paul unflinchingly believed that God could perform miracles. Sometimes it is our lack of belief that keeps us from experiencing the miraculous side of God. We don't ask for the miracles because we don't really believe they can happen.

? How do you think miracles like this impacted Paul's ministry?

Possible answers: Paul's personal belief was surely strengthened by seeing miracles like this. As news of miracles done by God through Paul spread, it would make people more eager to meet Paul and hear what he had to say about Jesus, as a tangible connection to the Divine.

? How would you feel if you were Eutychus, or his friends or family?

Possible answers: Personal; will vary. It lets people put themselves in others' shoes and feel grateful at God's goodness, as well as awed at the miraculous things He does.

? What does this miracle say about God's power and care for those people, and for people in general?

Possible answers: Talking to someone who almost died would be a huge comfort and relief. This miracle shows that God hears and answers prayer, and cares about His people in every moment.

? Optional question: Compare and contrast Paul raising Eutychus from the dead with Jesus raising someone (e.g. the little girl in Luke 8:49-56) from the dead. What was the same? What was different? What can we learn from these events?

Possible answers: These will vary; but overall people should take away that God answers prayer; that he has power over life and death; that there is no intrinsic merit to those who are raised from the dead, but that it is a gift from God, and that even if you're raised from the dead you're not immortal; it's a temporary gift to those who are alive and love you, and to give you a chance to live your life more fully.

Read Out Loud: Acts 20:13-38 (NIV)

¹³We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot. ¹⁴When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. ¹⁵The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Chios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

²²"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing

me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

²⁵ “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

³² “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

Chewing The Fat

Eutychus, Paul, and the others went up and ate after Eutychus was raised from the dead, which may seem like an odd thing to note. However, Jesus told the parents of the girl he raised from the dead to give her something to eat, and when Jesus rose from the dead and met his disciples on the beach he ate in front of them. There’s something undeniably human and normal about eating with others, that shows a body and not just a soul. “Breaking bread” could also mean having communion together, providing the believers a chance to deepen their spiritual connection and thank God for the miracle they just witnessed.

? Verse 22 says that Paul is “compelled by the Spirit.” Have you ever felt God calling you to something you didn’t want to do? How did you respond, and do you wish you had responded differently?
Possible answers: Personal; will vary. This digs into the heart of obedience and brings home how hard this was for Paul, and yet how he was being faithful even facing death.

? Optional question: Consider the parallels between Paul and Jesus’ roads to Jerusalem—Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:13-38) vs. Jesus telling his disciples he would suffer and die (Mark 8:31, 9:30-32, 10:32-34). How were their journeys similar and different?
Possible answer: They both submitted to God’s will. Both knew that suffering was imminent when they reached Jerusalem. Jesus was betrayed by one of his followers while Paul was seized by Jews from the province of Asia. In both cases, the Roman government became involved.

? Looking at verse 24, Paul considered his life worth nothing. Why do you think Paul was so driven?

What can we learn from his attitude, and how can we apply it to our own lives?

Possible answer: Paul knew his time was limited, and that every moment of his life would best be spent testifying about God in word and in deed. We need to find our own sense of urgency, realizing that every opportunity may be our last, and that each interaction is precious and may be life-changing for those with whom we interact.

Saying Grace

God's goodness and grace are through-lines of every letter Paul wrote. The apostle talks about himself before he met God as the chief of sinners with a perfect Jewish pedigree, but that his history means nothing compared to God's grace. We also have nothing in ourselves that is admirable or praiseworthy except as relates to obeying God and serving Him in His grace. We cannot earn our forgiveness; it is always and only a gift from God.

? Look at the commands Paul gives to the

Christians in verses 25-31. How are these still relevant for believers today?

Possible Answers: Keep watch over themselves and the flock; be shepherds of the church; be on guard for those who will come into the church and try to distort the truth and draw people away from God. We face many of the same issues today that first-century believers did, and a focus on community and God's truth will always apply to the core of who Christians are.

? Does obeying God mean we will not suffer? How can we find courage to face our future serving God?

Possible answers: No. Paul's life is an excellent example of how we often do suffer greatly as followers of Christ. We need to trust God and believe that He will give us the strength and courage to face suffering as we experience it, and to bring good and meaning out of it.

? The last thing Paul did with the believers in Ephesus was pray. Why might it be significant that they did this together?

Possible answer: This action taken together set their minds on God, linking a strong memory with an eternally significant action. See relevant verse Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." God wants us to pray to Him for what we need, and He is there and listening to us, always.

? Paul knew he was never going to see these people again. How do you think that affected what he said?

Possible answers: Paul ministered to them and fed them truth and honest experience from his own life without pulling any punches—he had no time to mince words. He shared the straight truth in love, knowing that his last words would stick in their minds and affect them.

Leader's Note: In verses 18 and 26 Paul's communication style is different from the stereotypical Minnesotan attitude—he just LAYS IT ALL OUT THERE, blunt and direct and clear, honest and open.

For Discussion and Accountability

? If you knew you weren't going to see someone you loved again, what words would you want to leave them with? What do you need to say to someone this week to express God's love or to bring about reconciliation in a relationship?

? Paul said his greatest aim was to testify to the good news of God's grace. How are you being called to a similar goal? What does it look like to live out the gospel in your life or profession? In your family? With your friends? With strangers?