

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 20:1-38 | LEAVE IT ALL ON THE FIELD

KEY TERMS

The first day of the week - The first time in the NT where we see Christians meeting together on Sunday. The connection to "breaking bread," most commonly understood as a reference to communion, seems to indicate this is a formal Sunday gathering of the church. By the end of the 1st century, Christians regularly gathered for worship on Sundays.

Miletus - A coastal town 30 miles from Ephesus. Paul calls the elders of the Ephesian church to come see him in Miletus.

Elders/Overseers - The leaders of the church in Ephesus. The two terms are used interchangeably in Acts 20. *Elder* comes from the Greek word *presbuteros* and was a term borrowed from Jewish temple leadership, while *overseer* comes from the Greek word *episkopos*, where we get our English word "bishop."

BACKGROUND

Upon leaving Ephesus, Paul travels throughout Macedonia, Greece, and Syria, before landing in Troas for seven days (vv. 1-6). In Troas, Paul gathered with a group of Christians to celebrate communion *on the first day of the week* (v. 7) and ended up speaking with them until midnight. While Paul was talking, a young man named Eutychus (whose name means "lucky"), fell asleep and fell out a window and died (v. 9). However, when Paul went down to Eutychus he was revived and the church continued to meet until morning (vv. 10-12). Paul then left Troas and continued his travels, *hastening to be at Jerusalem... on the day of Pentecost*, and ended up in Miletus (vv. 13-16.)

From Miletus, Paul summons the elders of the church in Ephesus to come meet with him (v. 17). Luke records much of Paul's words to the elders (Luke was at this meeting), which emphasize the coming end of Paul's ministry (*if only I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus*, v. 24) and the importance of the elders leading the church well (*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*, v. 28). Paul's words to the elders also warn them of *fierce wolves* who will come and try to destroy the church and lead people away from Jesus (v. 29). Paul ends his talk reminding the leaders to *help the weak* and sharing what has become a very famous saying of Jesus that is not recorded in the gospels: *it is more blessed to give than to receive* (v. 35). Finally, Paul prays for the elders and with *much weeping*, Paul departs (vv. 36-38).

GOING DEEPER

Reread Acts 20:24 and read 2 Timothy 4:7-8 and Philippians 3:7-21. Why do you think Paul consistently reminded people to finish well? What temptations can knock someone off the path of following Jesus? What is the reward for those who follow Jesus until the end?

DID YOU KNOW?

As Paul heads back to Jerusalem for the final time, it's now been over 20 years since his conversion and over 10 years of missionary journeys.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Acts 20:1-17. What is Paul up to in this chapter? Summarize what's going on. Who is he spending time with?
2. Read Acts 20:18-38. What are at least five things Paul includes in his words to the elders from the church at Ephesus?
3. What stands out to you about Paul's relationships in this chapter?

LIVING THE WORD

4. Someone famously said, "Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important." When you consider your calendar, is it filled more with the urgent things of life or the most important things in life?
5. If you were to describe what "leaving it all on the field" looks like in your faith journey, what do you need to do more of? What do you need to lay aside?
6. What are the biggest hinderances you face in trying to live this out? What is one step you want to take this week to apply Paul's words to your life?
7. Spend some time praying over these things, trusting in the "word of grace" that has been passed down to us through Paul in Christ.