



Walking Through the Scripture Together

September 14 - 20, 2008

Acts 20:1-38

Many Meetings

Text Acts 20:1-38 (TNIV)

Through Macedonia and Greece

1 When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-by and set out for Macedonia. **2** He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, **3** where he stayed three months. Because some Jews had plotted against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia. **4** He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia. **5** These men went on ahead and waited for us at Troas. **6** But we sailed from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Eutychus Raised From the Dead at Troas

7 On 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. **8** There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. **9** Seated 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. **10** Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" **11** Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. **12** The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

13 We 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. **14** When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. **15** The 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. **16** Paul 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.

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. **18** When 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. **19** I served the Lord with great humility

and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of the Jews. **20** You 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. **21** I 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. **23** I 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 everyone. **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 some 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.

Thought

The grand sweep of the total narrative, the great story moving across land and sea and bring the hero (in Paul's case, the anti-hero) safely through to his destination despite it all, catches up within these sharply described moments of death and life, of worship, fellowship and celebration. Somehow the church is called in every generation to keep its eyes both on the larger horizon and on the immediate, practical, homely, personal and often pressing calls on our time, prayer, and attention. The slave-boy in the window and the thousand-mile journey, like the rose and the redwood, are of equal significance.

NT Wright *Acts for Everyone*

Small Group Discussion Guide

Lean In

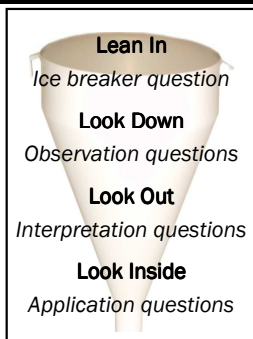
- Share what you think has been the funniest or most awkward moment in a class, Bible study or small group you were in. What happened?

Look Down / Look Out

- What did Paul do in the immediate aftermath of the riot in Ephesus? What did he make a point of doing as he traveled south through Greece? What does this say about his heart? Where were his priorities?
- Who was traveling with Paul? Any guesses as to why Paul had such a large company with him?
- What lesson or lessons do you see in the story about Eutychus? What do you learn from Paul's response to the crisis of Eutychus' sudden fall? What do you think is Luke's purpose in relating this story?
- Why was Paul in such a hurry to get to Jerusalem? What important task, unmentioned by Luke, was Paul feeling compelled to carry out (see Romans 15:25-27)?
- What most impresses you about Paul's interaction and last words to the Ephesian elders? How did he summarize his life? His message and purpose? What challenge does he issue to them?

Look Inside

- Would you describe yourself as a "people person" or as someone more task oriented? Why do you think this is? How do you personally maintain a balance between these?
- What would you identify as your driving passion in life? How is this passion evident in the way you are living?
- Put yourself in this circle of leaders around Paul. What impresses you most in their parting from one another? With whom do you share this kind of relationship?



Family Discussion Guide

Day One Acts 20:1-6

Do your vacations and family trips tend to be more about seeing people or seeing places? Which do you enjoy most? Why?

Day Two Acts 20:7-12

Eutychus probably fell asleep because of exhaustion after a long day's work. When have you found it hard to stay awake or really engage in a church service or Bible study? Why do you think that happens? How excited are you usually to go to church? Why?

Day Three Acts 20:13-21

If you knew this was the last time you would see your best friend (or friends), what would you say to them? Why?

Day Four Acts 20:22-31

Sharing the message of Jesus on foreign missions was what was most important for Paul. What would you say is the most important thing in your life now? Why?

Day Five Acts 20:32-38

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." Do you agree with this statement? When most recently have you experienced the blessing of giving?

Special focus

The Offering for the poor in Jerusalem...

In the words of Paul

Regarding the relief offering for poor Christians that is being collected, you get the same instructions I gave the churches in Galatia. Every Sunday each of you make an offering and put it in safekeeping. Be as generous as you can. When I get there you'll have it ready, and I won't have to make a special appeal. Then after I arrive, I'll write letters authorizing whomever you delegate, and send them off to Jerusalem to deliver your gift. If you think it best that I go along, I'll be glad to travel with them. **1 Corinthians 16:1-4**

I'm not trying to order you around against your will. But by bringing in the Macedonians' enthusiasm as a stimulus to your love, I am hoping to bring the best out of you. You are familiar with the generosity of our Master, Jesus Christ. Rich as he was, he gave it all away for us—in one stroke he became poor and we became rich. So here's what I think: The best thing you can do right now is to finish what you started last year and not let those good intentions grow stale. Your heart's been in the right place all along. You've got what it takes to finish it up, so go to it. Once the commitment is clear, you do what you can, not what you can't. The heart regulates the hands. This isn't so others can take it easy while you sweat it out. No, you're shoulder to shoulder with them all the way, your surplus matching their deficit, their surplus matching your deficit. In the end you come out even. **2 Corinthians 8:8-14**

Remember: A stingy planter gets a stingy crop; a lavish planter gets a lavish crop. I want each of you to take plenty of time to think it over, and make up your own mind what you will give. That will protect you against sob stories and arm-twisting. God loves it when the giver delights in the giving. **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**

Carrying out this social relief work involves far more than helping meet the bare needs of poor Christians. It also produces abundant and bountiful thanksgivings to God. This relief offering is a prod to live at your very best, showing your gratitude to God by being openly obedient to the plain meaning of the Message of Christ.

2 Corinthians 9:12-13



details, details...

Then he traveled down to Greece where he stayed 3 months

This was probably during the winter months of AD 57-58. It is thought that during this time Paul wrote what many consider to be his masterpiece — the letter to the Romans.

Several men were traveling with Paul

The Bible has some interesting definitions — for instance, Peter says a "few" were saved in the ark during the flood, specifically eight (see 1 Peter 3). And here "several" means seven — or counting Luke, eight. As made clear in Paul's letters to the Corinthians, these men represented the "face" of the churches of Macedonia and Achaia. They wanted to insure that the poor in Jerusalem not only received a "check" or food box but also saw their face.

A young man named Eutychus

It's debated whether or not the young man actually died or was just stunned (the text says he was "carried up dead" so that's good enough for me). Regardless, this makes for a somewhat humorous interlude akin to the story about the young servant girl Rhoda in Acts 12. Perhaps what underlies the humor amidst the tragedy is that Eutychus means "lucky." So "Lucky" is sitting in the window, perhaps exhausted by a hard days work, made further drowsy by the numerous, flickering, oil lamps in a room no doubt crammed full of warm bodies, and falls into a deep sleep right on out the window. Paul goes down and falls on him ("took him in his arms" says the NLT) much as Elijah did the widow's dead son (see 1 Kings 17:17-24). This is the first specific example of Paul raising the dead, and corresponds to Peter raising Dorcas/Tabitha from the dead back in Acts 9. It's significant that like our modern day Energizer Rabbit, after restoring "Lucky" to the community, Paul went on and on until daybreak. Most will generally not cite this is an example or pattern for pastors today.