

CLOSER LOOK

A LIFEGROUP STUDY ON THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE



From Finish to Start

Acts 20

April 3, 2022

MAIN POINT

The early church teaches us how friends reach the world together.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Think of someone who has impacted your faith. How might you describe that relationship?

Consider a time when you felt alone or vulnerable. How might the human need for friendship be useful in reaching others with the Gospel?

We all have a deep need for friendship. That need helps us to connect with others and ultimately to Christ, who came to make us friends with God. Acts shows us how Paul's friendships impacted others for the sake of the Gospel.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Acts 20:36-38

How did the Ephesian Elders respond to news that Paul was leaving? What does this suggest about his relationships with them?

How are your friendships with believers different from your friendships with those who don't know the Lord? Why do you think God designed it to be that way?

The Ephesian Elders showed a great deal of emotion and affection for Paul. He wasn't just rolling through preaching at them. He was touching lives in a profound and personal way.

Have a volunteer read Acts 21:1-6

How does this passage echo the verses we just read (Acts 20:36-38)?

What do these verses reveal about Paul's approach to friendship?

What specific action does Paul take in both accounts? What does his action reveal about his intentions in relationships?

What can we learn from Paul's example in these passages? How might we implement his approach in our own lives?

Again, as he prepares to leave, we see people whom he has impacted gather together to see him off. They bring their families along. Their actions show a clear devotion to him. Where the tendency for many might be to limit close friendships, it seems to be a key aspect of Paul's approach to ministry. He was developing strong bonds globally. Each time he left, he gathered people together, kneeled down, and prayed. His friendships had a purpose and always included God.

Have a volunteer read John 15:13-15

What do these verses say about the relationship that exists between us and God?

Do you tend to think of Christ more as a friend or as a master? Why?

Share an example from everyday life when Jesus has shown Himself to be your friend.

What distinction does Jesus make between servants and friends? What does He say makes us friends and not merely servants?

Why do you think Jesus wants us to know that He considers us friends?

Jesus says that we are His friends. We are no longer servants because He has shared with us all that He has heard from the Father, so we do not blindly serve.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scriptures apply directly to their lives.

When you think about personal ministry, how do you tend to expect those relationships to look? How might developing deeper friendships change your personal ministry efforts and effectiveness?

What areas in your life might provide opportunities where you could be more open to developing deep and lasting friendships?

How might you begin to approach close friendships you already have differently for the sake of sharing the Gospel and pointing others to Christ?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Take a moment to ask your group if there are any prayer requests.

PRAY WITH YOUR GROUP

Pray over your group's prayer requests, along with the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for your son Jesus, for sacrificing so greatly to bring us into right relationship with You, so that we may call You friend. Thank You for the model of friendship You provided in Jesus and in Paul. Help us to thrive in friendship with others and point others towards friendship with You. Amen.

LP REMINDERS

- April 14: 1825 Worship Night
- April 16-17: Easter 24 Hours of Prayer
- April 24: Baptisms
- April 29-30: All Campus Women's Gathering
- June 6-10: CentriKid Camp
- July 11-15: Student Camp
- Stay up to date with emails and/or social media for any changes on Lifepoint's meeting times.

MEMORIZE

"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." John 15:15

COMMENTARY

Acts 20:33-38. Paul was never motivated by money or renown, as proven by his labors that provided for his own needs and those who accompanied him. Jesus' saying, It is more blessed to give than to receive, is found only here. It resembles some of Jesus' sayings elsewhere (Luke 6:38). Jesus obviously said much more than is recorded in the Gospels (John 20:30-31; 21:25).

Acts 21:1. The shipboard journey continued from Ephesus by way of Cos to Rhodes and Patara. This is the third "we" section in Acts. It extends through 21:18.

21:3. The most common vessels sailing the Mediterranean were grain ships from Egypt, heading to the rest of the Roman Empire (but especially Rome).

21:4. Some Christians in Tyre had received from the Holy Spirit the same message that Paul disclosed in Ephesus: Trouble awaited Paul in Jerusalem (20:22-23).

21:5-6. The departure from the Christians at Tyre resembled the departure from Miletus and the Ephesian elders (20:37-38). They knew Paul was heading for his deepest trouble yet.

15:13-14 In the OT, only Abraham (2Ch 20:7; Isa 41:8), and by implication Moses (Ex 33:11), are called “friends of God.” Jesus extended this privilege to all obedient believers.