



HomeGroup Discussion Questions

Week 9: Nov 7-13

WELCOME TO WEEK 9! ONE NOTE IS THAT PASTOR TOM READS THE PASSAGE THIS WEEK, SO IT WOULD BE GREAT IF EVERYONE HAS A BIBLE READY TO READ AS WELL TO FOLLOW ALONG.

PICK 2-3 QUESTIONS BELOW THAT ARE BEST SUITED FOR YOUR GROUP.

Relay runners know how crucial the handoff is. Even the fastest athletes can disqualify a relay team through a poorly executed handoff or by simply dropping the baton. The apostle Paul was keenly aware of the importance of another type of handoff that happens in gospel ministry. The time had come for others to grab and run with a baton that he had been carrying. We should pay attention because, here in Acts 20, this is what a well-executed handoff looks like! **Pastor Tom does not mention this kind of illustration in the sermon, so it's only here as a warmup for the first "CONNECT" question below. Feel free to skip it if you're not planning to use that question.**

MAIN TEXT: Acts 20:17-38

CONNECT

1. Think about and describe a time in your life where you either had to take on something new that another person had been doing, or you passed off something you had been doing to someone else. What did you learn from the experience?
2. What stood out to you about the sermon this week?

LEARN

3. Take note of Paul's self-description of his life in verses 18-21. What do you see and how were these attributes an example for the Ephesian elders to follow?
Pastor Tom mentions consistency, authenticity, humility, perseverance, boldness, and a commitment to preach the whole gospel.
4. Stop for a minute and imagine facing Paul's circumstances in verses 22-23. What kind of thoughts or emotions would you be experiencing?

This isn't directly mentioned in the sermon, but could be a good discussion point. First, Paul is facing a conviction to get to Jerusalem but with a lot of uncertainty in v. 22. What is clear, though, is that he's going to face great hardship. The question, then, is asking you to imagine being in Paul's situation. He knows what he needs to do, doesn't know how it will all unfold, but is sure that it's going to be costly.

5. How would you describe Paul's mindset in verses 24-27? What keeps him leaning forward in ministry even as he faces such uncertainty and the prospect of great difficulty? Pastor Tom talks about v. 24 as Paul's life's mission. His life has no value except to continue to live faithfully to what Jesus has called him to do. He is laser-focused on completing that mission regardless of the physical harm it may bring to his life.

6. Read through verses 28-35. What do you see as the primary responsibilities the elders are to give themselves to? Why do you think Paul would emphasize these? They are to watch their own lives and the life of the flock—to care for it and protect it against both the dangers from the outside and those from the inside. They are to be aware of those who might distort the gospel to try to draw people away from faithfulness to Christ. It's also implied that they should follow Paul's example of working hard and not being lured away by wealth or accumulating a lot of stuff that could instead be given to those in need.

APPLY

7. What aspect of Paul's example from this passage (and others in Acts) do you desire most for your life? Why?

8. Think about Paul's words in verse 24. How does that compare with your life's mission? What are the values our culture presents that conflict with this?

As one example, Pastor Tom highlights how COVID has inspired some to fixate on self-preservation as the highest goal. We might be consumed by protecting our health! Paul says, "I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself..." Paul isn't just an adrenaline junky! No, he sees the "surpassing value" of faithfulness to Christ (Phil 3:8). Tom also highlights Matt 16:24.

9. Based on the first part of verse 28, Pastor Tom said that each person has to care for his or her own soul before he or she can lead others. What are you doing—or should be doing—to care for your soul?

Examples should include reading and meditating on Scripture, prayer, community with other believers, and practicing generosity.

10. Not many of us are elders, yet all Jesus-followers have a responsibility to watch out for "fierce wolves" among us! What do you think this means for us today? What are 1 or 2 forms these kind of threats might pose in our church?

Pastor Tom mentioned the internal threat of becoming “spiritual foodies,” where we become so accustomed to watching the service in our living rooms and on our comfortable couches that we take on the role of a consumer more than as a participant in worship. That’s one danger, but there are many other possibilities. Other candidates include the prosperity gospel (a.k.a., “health and wealth,” or “name-it-and-claim-it”); a belief that “the mountains are my church,” which takes you away from corporate worship; a belief that Jesus would never call you to something that’s difficult or dangerous, etc.