

### Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

#### Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

#### Further Study

Complete on your own or with your small group.

#### Personal Reflection

Song for the week: Through it All - Bethel

Song links: <https://youtu.be/4GthZbt1IPo?si=IkGvHlhJbm0T2kki>

**Read Acts 20:13-38** Click on any Bible verse in the study to read it or use your own Bible.



In the first 12 verses of Acts 20, Paul left Ephesus (#4 on the map), met Timothy and Erastus in Macedonia (#5), went to Greece (Corinth #6) then back to Macedonia (#7) and Phillipi (#8) before joining the others in Troas (#9).

Paul's companions then sailed to Assos (#10) while for reasons unknown, Paul walked there. The next stops (#11-14) were just for a day each: Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Miletus.

Luke made an orderly account of the stops as they made their way back to Jerusalem. What purpose might he have had in detailing these stops? How do they help prove the accuracy of what he wrote?

Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, also known as Shavuot, which “commemorates the single most important event in Israel’s history: the giving of the Torah to Moses at Mount Sinai (*International Fellowship of Christians and Jews*).”

The holiday is also known as the Festival of Weeks, since it is celebrated for seven weeks (or 50 days) after Passover. Shavuot is a Hebrew word which means weeks and Pentecost is the Greek word for 50. It is one of the three pilgrim feasts that requires Jewish men to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate by bringing the first harvest of grain including 2 leavened loaves of bread. The proselytes would also be present. (Reminder: Proselytes were the non-Jews who had converted and celebrated the Jewish holidays.)

The Holy Spirit came upon those who believed in Jesus during this celebration ushering in the church age, in which we still live. *Optional, read these related verses: Acts 2:1-4, Leviticus 23:16-20*

As it was a pilgrim feast, Paul knew many dispersed Jews would be in Jerusalem to celebrate. How might this opportunity of celebrating both the Old Testament Pentecost and the new Pentecost on the same day open doors for Paul to teach about Jesus? (Consider *Mathew 5:17, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8*)

Paul had taught the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles during his three missionary journeys. How did the Holy Spirit coming on this day confirm that God is for all people? (Hint: the two loaves)

A trip to Ephesus where Paul loved the growing church would take time; he knew so many there as he had been in Ephesus for three years. Instead he sent for the elders of the church to join him in Miletus so that he could say goodbye to them and they could report back to the church.

Paul began by reminding the elders of his reputation.

Read *Proverbs 22:1* and *Ecclesiastes 7:1*. Summarize their message.

What reputation are you building? What does it say about you?

How might your reputation help others to receive what you have to say about Jesus?

Paul reminded the elders that he taught people “must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.” Without repentance of sin there is no acknowledgement of the need for a Savior nor reconciliation with God. Paul was providing the gospel message even to those who already knew it.

Paul consistently provided the full gospel. Why might he have continued to do so even with believers in Jesus?

What are some examples of not providing the full gospel? Why might these be harmful to the truth of salvation through Jesus? (Example: Speaking of only God, not mentioning which god when we talk with people.)

At One Hope we also return to the full gospel of Jesus repeatedly. How does this affect your faith and relationship with God?

Paul was returning to Jerusalem with the gifts from other churches for the church in Jerusalem. While the gift giving would have provided blessings and encouragement in Jerusalem, Paul says he was returning “not knowing what will happen to me there.”

Initially, when Paul went to Jerusalem the disciples were afraid of him. Remember Paul was part of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council that upheld Jewish law and tradition and which put believers in Jesus in prison and killed them. Barnabas’s sharing what he personally experienced with Paul convinced the disciples to embrace Paul. For a while he was able to move about freely. Educated as a Grecian, he was able to connect with the other Greek speaking Jews (Hellenistic Jews). But then they tried to kill him so the disciples sent Paul to Tarsus. *Optional, read Philipians 3:3-6, Acts 21:39, Acts 22:3, Acts 26:10, Acts 9:1-2, Acts 9:26-30*

What are the two encouragements and the two warnings Paul gives the elders in *Acts 20:28-31*?

These are still applicable to the church today. Does Paul saying that “ I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears” encourage you? If so, how? What does the depth of his emotion reveal to you?

Paul warned of people presenting distorted truths. How does spending time in God’s Word help you know when truths are distorted?

### **Putting it into practice:**

Even in his three missionary journeys Paul found that in “every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.” He then told the elders that “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.”

How do Paul’s words point to his purpose?

At One Hope the messages are often about our purpose. Write down the main purpose we have as believers in Jesus. Then write down the ways God has gifted you and the experiences He has redeemed in your life which help you in living out this purpose.

## **Further Study**

Last week's study said that Paul's letters provided encouragement. "Within the word *encouragement* we see the word "courage," which means the ability to face danger and deal with it. To encourage, then, is to help develop that ability in someone, while the "ment" at the end makes that development into a noun, the act of giving courage or support to another (*vocabulary.com*)."

Read *Ephesians 1:1-2, Galatians 1:1-5, Phillipians 1:1-5, Colossians 1:1-5*. What were some of the words Paul used to encourage the churches he was writing to?

Read *Ephesians 6:23-24, Galatians 6:18, Phillipians 4:21-23, Colossians 4:10-18*. What were some of the words Paul used to encourage as he completed his letters to the churches?

As Paul left the elders he encouraged them. Read *Acts 20:32*. What words of encouragement did he give to them?

Paul wrote "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (*1 Thessalonians 5:11*)."

Take some time in small group to encourage and build each other up. What can you call out in each person?

How can you continue to encourage each other this week?

If you are doing this study on your own, find opportunities to encourage people from One Hope on Sunday and throughout the week.

## **Pray**

"When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. (*Acts 20:36-37*)"

Paul knew encouragement was important. He also knew that praying together was important. Just as the first believers in the risen Jesus prayed together constantly, so did Paul and the believers he had formed relationships with. God is not distant, He is always present and ready to hear from us.

*Optional, read Acts 1:14, Acts 2:42*

As a group, commit to pray specifically for one member of the small group each day. If you have days without names assigned to them, consider praying for our One Hope pastors. Consider texting the person you are praying for with a simple "I am praying for you today" or "What can I pray for you today?" Not much is more encouraging than to receive a message that someone is thinking about and praying for you!

End your small group time praying for each other, your group, our church and the leaders at our church.