

## Acts 20:17-38: What Would Jesus Do? Part 2

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### I. Introduction

If Jesus were you, what would He do? This is basically what it means to be a Christian. That is, it's making decisions the way Jesus did or would today. So if Jesus was living your life, how would He react to news of cancer, a miserable job, a cheating spouse, crippling health issues, death of a loved one, how would He respond to everything in your life both good and bad? As a Christian you were supposed to be taught how to do this and then you were supposed to show others.

### II. Acts 20:17-38: Paul Showed the Ephesians How to Live like Jesus, Now They're Responsible to Show Others

**20:17-38**, Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders describes how pastors are supposed to do their jobs (the words elder, overseer/bishop, and pastor are used interchangeably [Acts 20:17, 28], i.e., they are one and the same). But making disciples of Jesus is not just the responsibility of pastors. Jesus calls each one of us to show others how to be like Him (Matthew 29:19-20). As Paul says farewell to the Ephesian elders, he recalls how he showed them how to live like Jesus. It's a process that connects your life with the lives of those you disciple. As you guide them through life, their highs and lows become yours, you and they become family as Jesus became family with His disciples. And most importantly you connect them with Jesus and His Word. You show them how to let Jesus and His Word define everything in their universe instead of Satan. This is what Paul did as he disciplined those in Ephesus:

- (1) Paul lived life with them and among them (20:18, 20). That is, he showed them by example and personal one-on-one discipleship how Jesus' Word applied to real life.
- (2) He served them not himself (20:19, 22-25, 33-35). Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," a statement that none of His disciples wrote down but He said nonetheless. In fact, it's a statement that encapsulates what it means to be a disciple of Christ: it is to pour yourself out for others the way Jesus did. It means you invest your time, goods, energy, and emotions in the lives of others so that they can do the same. That's what Paul did and that's what the Lord calls each one of us to do.
- (3) It was painful and it brought Paul to tears because their pain became his and because of the opposition that comes with making disciples (20:19). When you disciple someone, their heartbreak and agony becomes yours, but so does their joy. The opposition may come from within, i.e., those you disciple may not like the correction you bring to them. But it also comes from without: Satan is always trying to keep you from showing others how to be like Jesus.
- (4) Whatever the hurt, whatever the sin, whatever the problem Paul showed them how to let God's Word interpret their circumstances and therefore what to do next (20:20, 24-25, 27, 32). Discipling someone is showing them how to let the Lord's voice interpret "the facts on the ground" so that they know what to do next. It's teaching them to hear God's voice instead of theirs or Satan's. We're quick to give things meaning, especially bad things. But if our definition of reality is wrong, our lives will go down the wrong path. When Jesus' disciples worried about food and clothing, Jesus showed them where their definition of reality was wrong (Matthew 6:25-33).

- (5) Paul did it in group settings but also one-on-one (20:20-21, 24-25, 27, 32). Discipleship is personal; it's life on life. It's not studying the Bible, but showing them that the Bible is God's voice calling them to walk with Him and His Son in everyday life.
- (6) Paul kept pointing to the answer: our relationship with the Father and the Son and their unending grace towards us (20:21, 24). No matter the problem, no matter the circumstance, we keep pointing them to the Goodnews found in walking with Christ and God.
- (7) Paul kept reminding them of who they are and where they live: Jesus' Kingdom (20:25). God's children don't have to live in misery and darkness anymore; they've been plucked out of Satan's kingdom of darkness and placed in Jesus' Kingdom of life and peace where the enemy cannot win (Colossians 1:13; 2:15).
- (8) Paul couldn't ignore a hurting or sinning brother, instead, he helped them. From beginning to end he brought the whole counsel of God to bear upon the lives of the Ephesians (20:26-27; cf. Matthew 28:20). This is what the Gospel does; it transforms your heart which breaks at the sight of a hurting or lost brother, as the Lord's heart did for us (Matthew 14:14; Luke 23:34).
- (9) Paul invested hours and hours on them and it took an emotional toll on him (20:31, 36-37). You're going to spend a lot of time with them and their joy and heartache will become your own. You both rejoice and weep with them (Romans 12:15).
- (10) Paul trusted that God (not Paul) would transform their lives as God's Word, His voice became clearer and clearer (20:32). The more we walk with the Lord, the more we're able to hear His voice, the more we're able to correctly define our reality, the more we're able to live in life and peace, even in the worst of circumstances (Romans 8:6).
- (11) Paul modeled this sacrificial way of life for them (20:34-35). You will show those you disciple how to be like Jesus by living that way in front of them; they will not only learn from what you show them but from your example.

**Is showing people how to live like Jesus complicated?** No, it's actually quite simple. What you're saying to them is this, "Your Savior is here. You don't have to live like this anymore; there's a better way to live." And at the heart of that is learning to define your world according to Jesus instead of Satan. When Paul did this with the Ephesians it transformed them, it set them on the path of life (Acts 19:18-20, 26-27).

This is the key question, how do you see the world around you? It's been that way from the beginning: when Adam and Eve let Satan define their world, they were convinced that they had the power to decide what was right and wrong, that life could be lived apart from God. They had no idea how disastrous it would be for them and the rest of us (Genesis 3).

But when you let God define your universe, even the impossible is possible. Satan may use your own family to tell you it's impossible. He may use your boss to tell you that unless you do it their way it won't work. Finally, Satan will use the challenge itself to scare and intimidate you into giving up. Who will you believe Jesus or Satan? David believed God as he faced Goliath (1 Samuel 17).

How was Jesus able to face Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11)? God the Father taught the Son His Word not as Bible study but as His voice which was the only true barometer on reality. God's Word taught Jesus what life is, how to see it and therefore what to do in all circumstances (cf. Isaiah 50:4; Luke 2:41-51). Every time Satan attacked with his lies and version of reality, Jesus responded with God's truth.



### III. Conclusion

*And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. .... Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*