

Spiritual Growth Resources: From Discipleship to Apostleship

Acts of the Church

Early Church Faith for Today



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The Empowered Church Table of Contents

A Brief overview of Acts 20	3
KNOW	4
GROW	6
GO	7
Scripture Memorization for this Week	8
Praise & Worship in Song	9



A Brief overview of Acts 20

After traveling throughout the region of Asia Minor and Greece, Paul has a big send-off. It's Saturday night, and he's giving his parting words to a crowded third-story room. The famous story of Eutychus falling asleep on Paul's sermon! Ever wonder what it was that Paul was saying that caused this young man to fall asleep. It's not uncommon for young people to space out in church. It's also not unusual for adults to dose off on Sabbath morning. Preachers and teachers don't feel bad; even Paul couldn't keep everyone's attention.

In Adventist circles, this story is known not so much for the content of Paul's farewell message. This passage refers to the day and time. It's the first day of the week (Sunday), and Paul is preaching. In giving Bible studies on the topic of the Sabbath, this verse comes up to say that Paul was in church on Sunday; thus, Christians were already meeting on Sundays for church. A careful reading quickly demonstrates that this was Saturday night which is already the first day of the week according to the way Jews kept track of days and times.

What we miss here in this chapter is Paul having a sense that he will most likely not make it back to see his friends again (Acts 20:24-25). He is aware of the dangers that await him in his journey towards Jerusalem.

Why not avoid Jerusalem altogether? Wouldn't he be more valuable alive than dead?

KNOW | GROW | GO

Leaving Friends Behind

KNOW

Read Acts 20

- 1. What similarities/differences do you find between Jesus' and Paul's upper room farewell?** *Acts 20 compared to Mark 14:17-72.*
 - A. Jesus talks about his betrayal. Paul had just escaped a plot against him (Acts 20:3).
 - B. They were both sharing a meal with friends before departing.
 - C. Jesus' audience was probably more shocked to hear that one of them would betray him.
 - D. Jesus instituted the communion service (Last Supper) on this occasion.
 - E. It wouldn't be the last time the disciples would see Jesus.
 - F. Other.
- 2. The word "encourage" appears three times. What does that tell you about Paul's ministry?** *Acts 20:1-2; Acts 20:12*
 - A. Paul's ministry wasn't just trying to convince people Jesus was the Messiah.
 - B. A holistic ministry includes outreach and strengthening the members.
 - C. It tells us that people can easily be "discouraged," and we need to encourage one another.
 - D. Paul knew that his words mattered. He also knew that taking time to talk and share a meal with people made a difference in people's faith journey.
 - E. Other.
- 3. Review how many things happened on Paul's last night in Troas.** *Acts 20:7-12*
 - A. Paul was having an evening dinner with friends.
 - B. Paul's talk went on until midnight (12:00 am)
 - C. A young man died after falling from the third floor but was revived.
 - D. Paul went back to talking until dawn.
 - E. Other.

4. **How fluid was Paul's itinerary when traveling from place to place?** *Acts 20:13-16*
 - A. Plans to go by ship can easily be changed to land travel instead.
 - B. In this case, Paul doesn't stay very long on these stops.
 - C. The destination was Jerusalem, and he wanted to get there by Pentecost.
 - D. Paul was used to changes to his plans.
 - E. Other.

5. **How was Paul an example to the believers?** *Acts 20:18-27*
 - A. He identified with the people.
 - B. Living among them (Acts 20:18).
 - C. Serving God with humility and tears (Acts 20:19).
 - D. Going from house to house (Acts 20:20).
 - E. Other.

6. **What was Paul's message to the Ephesian elders?** *Acts 20:17-35*
 - A. He reminded them of the work that has been accomplished up to then.
 - B. He informs them that he has to go to Jerusalem and may not see them again.
 - C. He is compelled to go because it is part of his calling to obey the Holy Spirit.
 - D. Pleads with them to take care of the "flock."
 - E. Warns them of "wolves" that will try to steal and confuse the disciples.
 - F. It is hard work to care for the church, but it is worth it.
 - G. Other.

7. **How did these men show their emotions and love for Paul?** *Acts 20:36-38*
 - A. They poured out their hearts in prayer for Paul and for one another.
 - B. There were tears shed, hugs, and kisses.
 - C. They were sad.
 - D. They were worried about Paul's well-being.
 - E. They accompanied him to the boat.
 - F. Other.

8. **What kind of legacy did Paul leave behind in these churches?**
 - A. The people knew he loved them.
 - B. Paul had a strong work ethic.
 - C. They saw how passionate Paul was about the preaching of the gospel.
 - D. Paul treated everyone as equals and didn't hold back the truth from anyone.
 - E. Other.

G R O W

Paul was always a hard worker, and he believed in hard work. He even wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica that they shouldn't eat if they didn't work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Paul did not want to be a burden to anybody. He didn't ask for money or handouts. He declared that he had the right to do so but preferred not to so that people couldn't say he was only doing it for his self-interest.

Paul was open with the people. He told them to hold him up as an example. By doing this, Paul held himself accountable, knowing that people would look up to him. Paul admitted when he was wrong, which is a good thing to teach other people. Paul didn't ask them to think of him as perfect. He was transparent, honest, and at times vulnerable. Part of his transparency was admitting his shortcomings and showing people how to confess, repent, and grow from the experience.

Paul also knew when it was time to go. These decisions are hard when you've invested so much time, sweat, and tears. Sometimes leaving wasn't always up to him. He is forced to leave because of those seeking to cause harm to him. But here, in chapter 20, Paul seems to know where he's going and how long he is staying. Some of his stays in previous trips lasted months; on others, it was years and even days as quick stops along the way. Many give in to the temptation to leave when things get tough. Besides threats to his life, Paul didn't shy away from difficulties and trials.

Related to the above paragraph is time invested in others. I would say that this issue puts our ability to mentor, befriend or be a friend to another person more than the lack of time. Paul was a very busy person, just like Jesus was. Yet, Paul took the time to mentor many young disciples. He spent time in people's homes. Paul brought many of these young disciples with him on trips. How many of us would spend the whole night talking about ministry, God, the Bible, life, etc.? I'm sure you've had those days. When the Spirit is leading us, you will know when is the time to do so.

Apply

1. Consider how your work ethic and your spiritual life are connected.
2. How transparent or vulnerable can you be with another person?
3. How much does prayer come into play when you are deciding where to go and for how long?
4. Check your calendar and calculate how much time in a week you can invest in other people.

G O

It is a challenge to write the GO part every week because of the interrelation between GROW and GO. When we minister to others, we are encouraged and challenged in our faith. The more we GO, the more we GROW, and the more we GROW, the more we GO.

Paul teaches us that outreach and pastoral care go together. Not necessarily is the person who does the active outreach the same person that offers the pastoral care. Paul does both as a theologian, evangelist, and pastor. Paul shared this responsibility with his disciples. Timothy, Silas, and the many other men and women he has met and disciplined along the way.

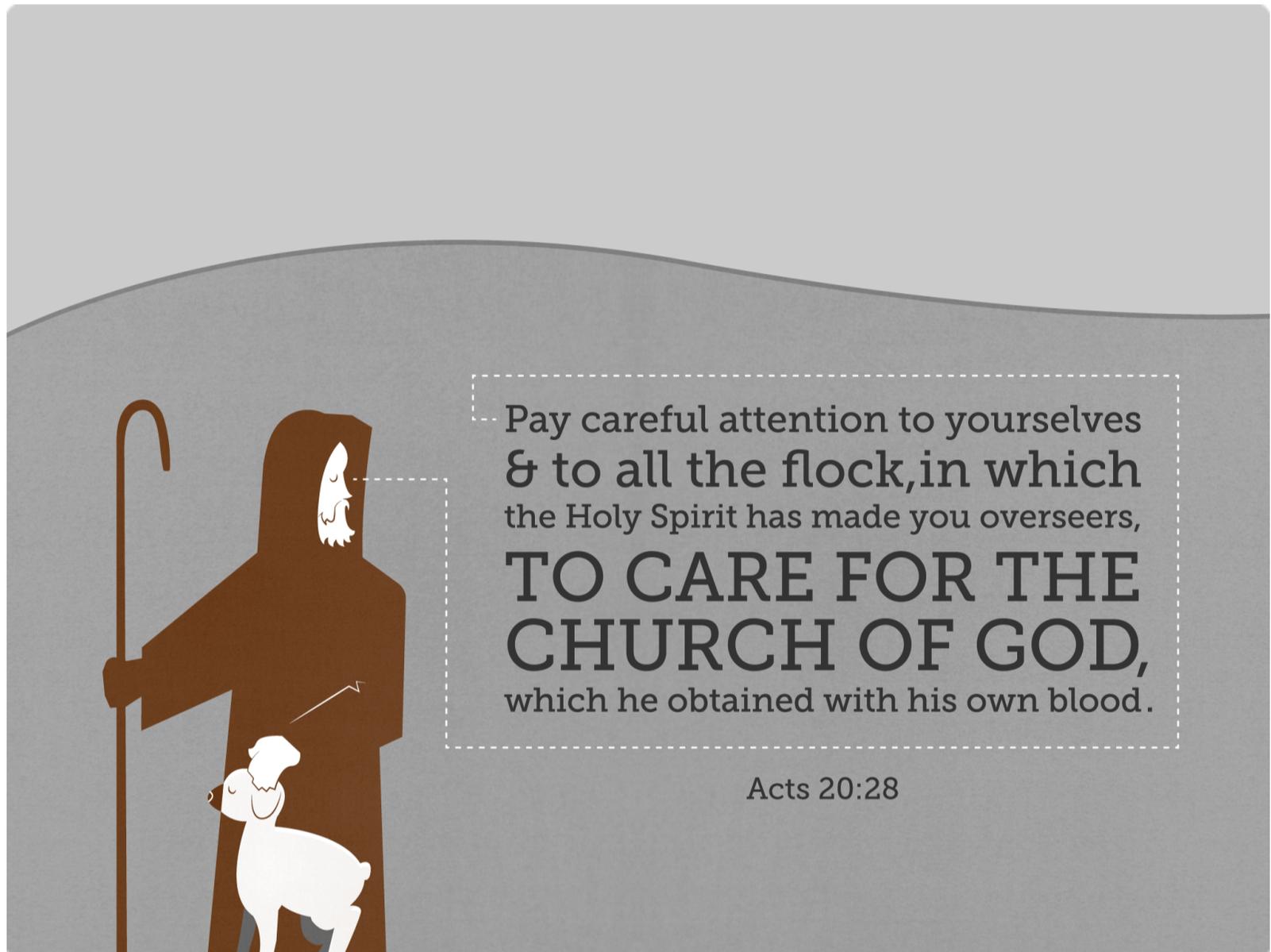
In this week's GO, I'll emphasize spending time encouraging those you have mentored and brought into the faith. Encourage those who have accepted the gospel and need to be strengthened in the faith with words of affirmation, testimonies, equipping to reach others. We need encouragement to deal with the everyday challenges that life brings too. We will have moments of discouragement, but this cannot stop us from giving up on our calling and using the gifts God has bestowed upon us.

Apply

1. Who can you encourage this week in the faith?
2. Think of someone which you played a role in bringing to faith. Give them a call this week and see how they are doing.
3. Which topics would keep you engaged and talkative for hours on end?
4. Would you like to be part of a class to learn how to share your faith? (Contact Pastor Pedro at ptrinidad@carmsda.org)

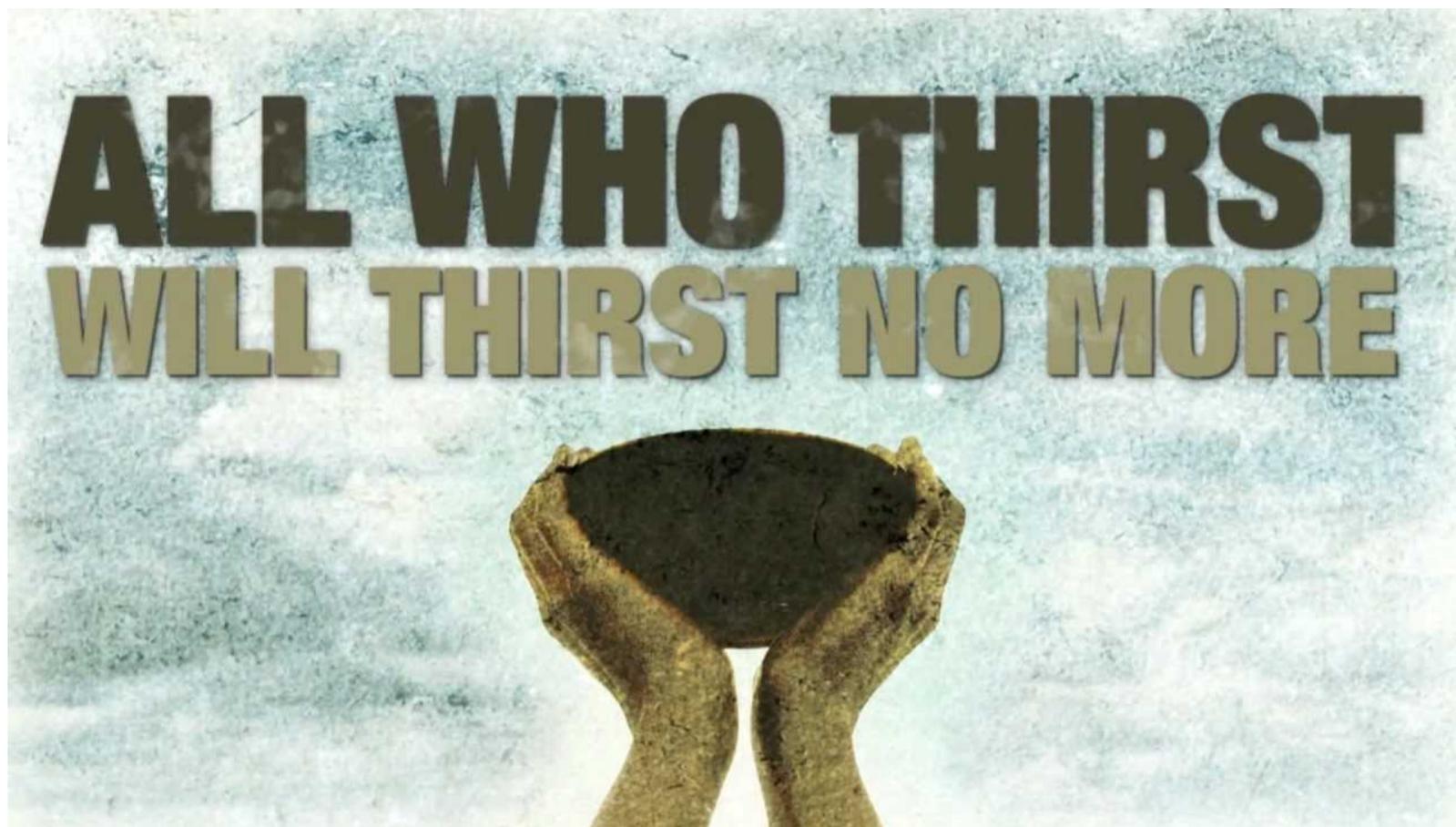
Scripture Memorization for this Week

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. – Acts 20:28

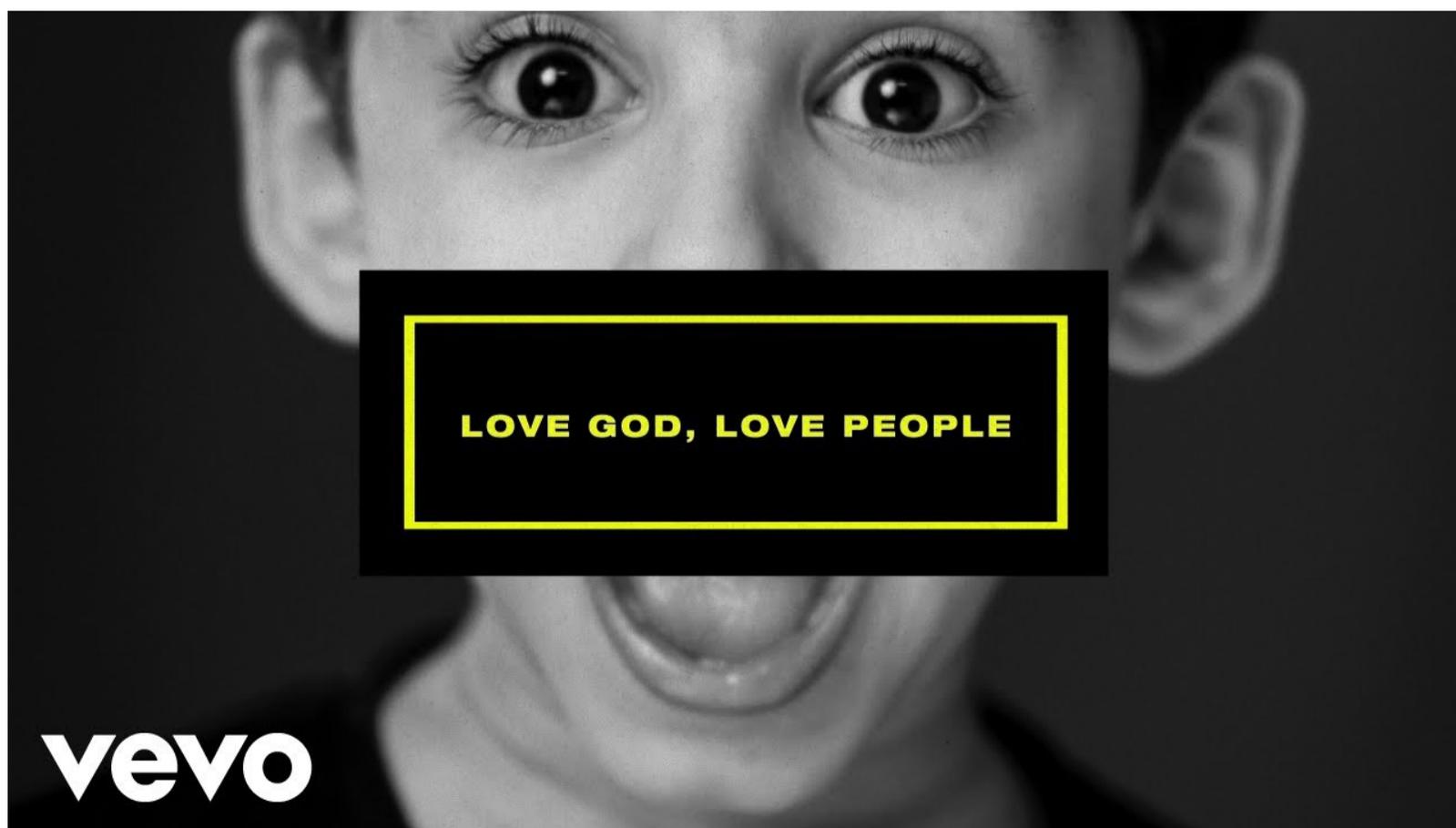


Praise & Worship in Song

The Well by Casting Crowns



Love God, Love People by Danny Gokey



10,000 Reasons by Matt Redman

