

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

How to Minister Effectively
Acts 20:17-37

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Decide if you will use the suggested song or another one to begin the time together.

Bible Study Leader:

The Bible studies in this Unit may tend to run long in time. Feel free to cut activities, limit extended lists, or do whatever you think wise to "watch" your time. Otherwise, the person in charge of the Worship Time will not have sufficient time to properly call the church to commitment to God's guidance through this passage of His Word.

Bring a ruler, tape measure, or yardstick.

Have newsprint or a large piece of plain paper available.

Have paper and pens for the youth study period.

Worship Time Leader:

Decide on the songs to be used in the worship time.

Ask a youth to read the Ministry Moment about the 10/40 window. Give the material to him/her ahead of time so that he/she can practice reading. If possible have a large map to point out the area in the 10/40 window.

Music Sources:

“Bless His Holy Name” **Maranatha Praise** Chorus Book, Expanded 3rd Edition, #76

“Come, Christians, Join to Sing.” Various hymnals

“I Will Sing of the Mercies” **Maranatha Praise** Chorus Book, Expanded 3rd Edition, #66

“My Life is In You, Lord” **Maranatha Praise** Chorus Book, Expanded 3rd Edition, #120

“Send Me, O Lord, Send Me” **The Worship Hymnal**, 2008, #367. (Other hymnals)

“Take the Name of Jesus With You” **The Worship Hymnal**, 2008, #313. (Other hymnals)

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***How to Minister Effectively*****Focal Text**

Acts 20:17-37

Background Text

Acts 20

Main Idea

Paul described the attitudes and actions that characterized his life and ministry.

Question to Explore

What specific attitudes and actions characterize effective Christian service?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to evaluate their lives by the attitudes and actions that characterized Paul's life and ministry.

Gathering together:Sing "Bless His Holy Name" **Maranatha Praise Chorus Book**, *Expanded 3rd Edition*, #76

or, "Come, Christians, Join to Sing" Various hymnals

First thoughts:

Billy Graham has preached all over the world during the last fifty years. Share a few facts about him or some faithful preacher you know. Ask, "What are the special things you know about him?" Then ask, "What makes his testimony great?" Help them discover that Billy Graham's life of faithfulness makes his testimony great. Today we learn about Paul's testimony.

Closing the Gathering Time:

The facts about Paul's life, the special things regarding his spiritual commitment, his determination, fearlessness, and more—comprise the heart of our worship experience

today. However, the heart of the story is not the end of the story nor the real reason for our study. All through our study, ask yourself how your life and testimony compares with Paul's.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

How to Minister Effectively

Focal Text

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Introduction to your personal study:

Most business concerns and many other organizations do an annual review of their organization. Through this yearly evaluation they are able to determine strengths and weaknesses of what they attempted to do. This leads to planning for adjustments and improvements in the coming year. This passage of scripture presents a review of Paul's ministry actions and can help us make changes or improvements in our ministry.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Paul Calls a Leadership Meeting (Acts 20:17)

Acts 20:17 On his return to Jerusalem from his second missionary journey, Paul stopped at Miletus, a seaport of Western Asia. He asked the elders of the church at Ephesus, 36 miles to the North, to come to Miletus for conversation with him. Elders were not apostles. They were the “bishops” or “pastors”. Each of the early large churches had several elders serving in it. In that role they functioned as servant ministers to the needs of the congregation. The function of the bishop (overseer) or pastor was not an “office” in the church. This was a very big change in the role of leadership from the priestly system of the Jews under the Old Covenant. Recall how Jesus modelled the role of the servant leader when he washed the disciples feet at the Last Supper and admonished (specifically James and John) them to choose a different way to serve than those in the Jewish priesthood or those leaders of secular businesses.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Paul Reviews His Ministry (Acts 20:18-30)

Acts 20:18 Paul begins his farewell address to those present. He begins his address on pastoral faithfulness to the elders. He reminds them of his conduct while he lived with them for three years.

Acts 20:19 Paul begins listing his ministerial conduct. He served the Lord. His service was rendered with humbleness and tears. He called himself a bond slave. It was not in a grovelling state of mind but one of humble-mindedness. He was not promoting himself but serving Christ. This was done in the midst of testing by the various plots of the Jews against him.

Acts 20:20 He was not reluctant to speak anything that would be beneficial to them as servant overseers. He did not shrink, conceal, or hold back on speaking the entire truth of the gospel to them. He was not seeking their favour or avoiding their criticism. He did not fail to speak. He said everything they needed to hear, no matter what the consequence to himself. He did this both in public services and individually as he went from home to home. His visits in the homes were not merely social calls, but of teaching and encouraging.

Acts 20:21 He continues listing his behaviour by telling that he had taught both Jews and Greek. He tells everyone that they must respond to God in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. These two elements are used in all of Paul’s preaching, repentance, and belief in Christ.

Acts 20:22 Paul tells the elders that he is going to Jerusalem. He does not know what events wait him there. He is so convinced that going to Jerusalem is the will of God that he said in essence that he was bound in the spirit or compelled from a high sense of

duty. He already sees himself as a prisoner, at least in his imagination. He is going despite the consequences.

Acts 20:23 Paul had warning about the jailing and difficulties that awaited him. It appears not only had Paul received a message from the Holy Spirit but that disciples along Paul's journey had received the same message warning of the imprisonment that waited for Paul.

Acts 20:24 Nothing deters Paul from his determination to go to Jerusalem. What he was to experience was of no concern to him. He was not avoiding any danger. His life had no value to him. He was committed to accomplish the work that Jesus had assigned to him. The task was to bear witness to the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:25 Paul further asserts that no one from Ephesus will see him again. Paul anticipates that he will suffer death as a martyr.

Acts 20:26 On this day that will be his last to see the elders, Paul says that he is guiltless before God. He has shared the message of repentance and faith. He has not been negligent in his proclamation of the message of Jesus.

Acts 20:27 Paul was not reluctant in his preaching. Paul asserts that he boldly shared the complete plan of God in saving men as shared in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul Instructs Church Leaders (Acts 20:28-31a)

Acts 20:28 Paul now begins his instructions to the elders or overseers of the church at Ephesus and any leaders from adjoining churches. This includes also the command to be shepherds that includes not only instruction but supervision of the church. They are called elders in v. 17, bishops in v. 28, and shepherds in this verse. Paul tells them that they became bishops by the call and appointment of the Holy Spirit. They are reminded that it is God's church and not theirs. It was purchased by Christ's blood.

Acts 20:29 Paul warns his audience that after he leaves false teachers will come. He compares these teachers to violent wolves. They would savage the believers as wolves rather than protect them as a faithful shepherd would. Paul warns of outsiders who will come to the church as wolves.

Acts 20:30 Not only will there be false teachers from outside the church. Some men from their own membership would seek to deceive and twist the truth in order to draw people into their own leadership sphere.

Acts 20:31 The commandment is given to watch - to be vigilant to the dangers around them. They are reminded that Paul in the three years he was there set an example of protecting from false teachers. He did not quit admonishing the whole time he was there.

The church at Ephesus was persecuted by Domitian about the time the book of Revelation was written. Domitian was a Roman Emperor and persecutor of Christian churches. He specifically targeted Christians. He reigned as Emperor from AD 81-AD 96. He was the first of the emperors to deify himself in his lifetime by assuming the title of Lord and God. Everyone was forced to believe in Domitian as Lord and God. Historical accounts indicate that he was a cruel person who was “drunk with power”.

Then the Nicolaitans tried to deceive the Ephesian Christians. This group taught that Christians could eat meat offered to idols and could engage in the excesses of unbelievers.

Paul Remembers Other Aspects of His Ministry (Acts 20:31b-35)

Acts 20:32 Paul in committing them to God is “depositing” them with God who not only would develop them but give them an inheritance with other Christians.

Acts 20:33 The elders are warned against coveting. Paul plainly states that he had not sought money, goods, or clothing from others. Clothing or apparel was included because, to the Oriental, wealth consisted largely of fine clothes.

Acts 20:34 One can picture Paul holding up his hands to demonstrate that by their effort he and those traveling with him were supported. His tent-making provided the income they lived on. Paul alone provided for their upkeep.

Acts 20:35 Paul states that he demonstrated that those who could support themselves must help those who could not support themselves. He was an example, an object lesson, to demonstrate helping the weak. He speaks of the duty of hard work and denial to relieve those who could not provide for themselves.

Paul Says Goodbye to the Leaders (Acts 20:36-37)

Acts 20:36 As Paul concluded his message to the Ephesians the whole group knelt and prayed. Early Christians adopted kneeling as the posture of prayer except on the Sabbath and during the time before Pentecost. At these times they stood.

Acts 20:37 It was a sad farewell. The elders recognized that they probably would never see Paul again. It was a time of regret, of grief, of sorrow. They hugged him and wept in the embraces.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

As you prepare your heart and mind to teach this lesson, pray for each one that may be present. Pray, too, for those who, logically, will probably not be there but should be. Pray that your own testimony will reflect the faithfulness that Paul acknowledged for his own life. Pray that, as their teacher, you will be able to do for your congregation what

Paul did for his—to encourage their faithfulness and fearlessness in witnessing to others.

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**

2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

How to Minister Effectively

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Acts 20:17-37

Background Text

Acts 20

Main Idea

Paul described the attitudes and actions that characterized his life and ministry.

Question to Explore

What specific attitudes and actions characterize effective Christian service?

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to evaluate their lives by the attitudes and actions that characterized Paul's life and ministry.

Connect with Life:

Hold up a ruler, tape measure, or yardstick.

Invite opinions from the group: What is this for? Seek to get several responses.

Explain: We use it to ensure that a distance is properly measured, that it is consistent with other items, that it meets a certain quality. Often we use it to compare the size or

characteristics of two things. Today we are going to see qualities in Paul's life and then compare our own characteristics to see how we compare with his.

Guide the Study:

Explain the occasion for Paul's meeting with the elders from Ephesus.

Say: Paul reviews his ministry with the church leaders. Let's look to see some of the qualities he had and actions that he took.

Read Acts 20:18-28.

On a piece of newsprint or blank paper write "Qualities and Actions of Paul's Ministry"

Question someone: What in Acts 20:18 do you see as a quality of Paul's? (He lived as an example).

(Write this on the paper with a felt point pen **making sure that the ink can't go through the paper onto a carpet or other things**).

Look for a response to: What in v. 20:19 should we put on this list? (Service was to God, humbleness, faced testing)

Write these things on the list.

State: Find qualities in v. 20. (Taught what was helpful, taught publicly and in homes)
List these on the chart.

Continue this by examining each verse and listing qualities on the paper.

- v. 21. (Taught all people, message was repentance and faith in Christ)
- v. 22. (Directed by the Holy Spirit)
- v. 23. (Willing to face future difficulties)
- v. 24. (Counted his life valueless, wanted to complete task given by Jesus)
- v. 25. (Willing to be separated from co-workers)
- v. 26. (Declared himself innocent because he had warned people)
- v. 27. (Always willing to teach all things of God)

Add: In v. 31 Paul continually warned the people and served with tears.

Urge opinions on this question: What is indicated by saying that he "**served with tears**"?

Now add: We find other characteristics of Paul in v. 33-35.

Have someone read Acts 20:33-35.

Continue with each verse as before--discovering the qualities of Paul and listing them on the paper.

- v. 33. (Paul did not covet money or clothing)
- v. 34. (Paul worked to supply his and his disciples' needs)
- v. 35. (Demonstrated by hard work to help the weak and needy)

Place another sheet of newsprint or cardboard on the wall or tripod with the words "Instructions to Church Leaders" printed on the top.

Say: Paul gave instructions to the elders in Acts 20:28-31. Let's list each item on this chart.

Read Acts 20:28-31.

Ask: What instructions do you find? Write each item as they are discovered.

- v. 28 (Keep watch over yourselves, keep watch over flock, be shepherds)
- v. 29. (Watch for false teachers)
- v. 30. (Be alert for deceivers from inside the church).
- v. 31. (Be on guard)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Involve participation with this: Let's review the qualities of Paul's ministry. Read each item from the "Qualities" chart and briefly discuss each one.

Now urge the church to do this: On a piece of paper evaluate yourself on each item. Put a "+" (plus sign) for each thing you are achieving fairly well. Put a "-" (minus sign) for each item with which you need to be strengthened.

Give your members time to do this. Do this for yourself to set the example.

Finally request this: Now do the same on each items on the “Instructions” sheet. Again, allow time for members to think through each item and grade themselves. Do this yourself.

After sufficient time for them to complete this have a prayer asking God to help us in the areas in which we need help.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

How to Minister Effectively **Acts 20:17-37**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Your Place in Ministry

As a youth in a home church, you may not have access to an organized Christian youth group such as found in a large church. You may have thought how great it would be to have someone in your church who would dedicate themselves to meet your needs as a youth or small group of youths—your own personal spiritual trainer!!! He or she could direct activities, be there to lean on, give good advice, help get new youth involved, protect confidentiality, and help you to stay up-to-date in Christian youth music, ideas, retreats, etc.

Many youth leaders were first faithful youth members. Pretend for a moment that you were able to be a youth minister. Write a job description for a youth minister including the ministry qualifications demonstrated by Paul that have been discussed in today's study from Acts 20:17-37.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***How to Minister Effectively***
Acts 20:17-37**Beginning the Service:**

Sing "I Will Sing of the Mercies" **Maranatha Praise** Chorus Book, Expanded 3rd Edition, #66

Read Psalm 89:1-2 and point out that this chorus is based on the psalm.

Sing the song again, prayerfully.

Offering:

We are aware of the mercies of the Lord in our lives. As we gather together today, we remember how He has provided for us this week. With thankful hearts we bring an offering as a way of acknowledging God's many provisions.

Praying for the World:

The 10/40 window is often mentioned in connection with missions and missionaries. Over three billion people live in the area that is located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator. This geographical area includes West Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and East Asia. Ninety-five per cent of all of the unreached people in today's world live in the approximately 60 countries in the 10/40 window. The best news coming out of the 10/40 window is that the Holy Spirit is working there. New churches are being formed and growing; people are accepting Christ as Saviour. Pray for people in the 10/40 window; for missionaries and others who are working to bring spiritual and physical help to them. Pray for the many who like us are meeting today in a home church. Pray that they are encouraged and blessed.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to

give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

How to Build a Testimony

Acts 20:17-37

Introduction:

Lottie Moon was 33 years old in 1873 when she began her missionary work in northern China. She served there until she died December 24, 1912. Thousands were saved because of her faithful work for the Lord. Her biography reports that “In the year of Lottie Moon’s death, 2,358 persons had been baptized...” [Catherine B. Allen, *The New Lottie Moon Story* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2nd edition, 1980), 292.] Her testimony began when she was saved. It was proven through her many years given to the Lord and the people of China. How do you build a testimony like that?

1. We build a testimony on a foundation of humility. (v. 19)

Humility is the very foundation of our testimony. God saved us through his mercy. It was not anything we did. Ephesians 2:8-9 reminds us, **“and this not from yourselves.”** Paul had no desire to serve Christ until he was saved. After that, it was **“to live is Christ, and to die is gain”** (Philippians 1:21). In verse 19 of our text Paul writes, **“I served the Lord with great humility...”** To serve humbly means that God gets all the credit for anything we do. Without him we can do nothing of any lasting value.

2. We build a testimony with a frame of emotion. (vv. 19, 31)

Emotion is a window into our hearts. Tears reveal our love and concern as we serve God. In verse 19, Paul says he served **“with tears.”** He also writes in verse 31, **“Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.”** His heart was in accomplishing God’s will. His desire was to see his friends saved. Paul reveals his heart in Romans 9:2, **“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers....”** Do we cry for our neighbours and friends? How earnestly do we desire their salvation? Are our hearts in our faithful service?

3. We build a testimony with walls of diligence. (v. 20-21)

In verses 20-21,27, Paul was diligent in sharing the gospel with anyone, both publicly and privately. His message was comprehensive. He told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I wonder how many people we do not witness to because we

aren't diligent. When we put walls on our homes, we want them to completely enclose our structure. When we share the gospel, we do not want to miss a person.

4. We build a testimony with a roof of right priorities. (v. 24)

A roof is a priority in building a house. In cold climates it keeps out the snow and holds in the heat. In warm climates it keeps out the rain and keeps the house cool. Paul put sharing the gospel as the priority in completing "the task the Lord Jesus" had given him **"of testifying to the gospel of God's grace"** (v. 24). He let the Lord Jesus set the priorities of his life. Shouldn't we do the same?

5. We build a testimony with bricks of unselfish hard work. (vv. 33-35)

A house does not look finished until siding or bricks are in place. Unselfish hard work finishes our testimonies. Paul normally took a job to provide for himself and his co-workers. He did not want to burden others for his needs. He worked hard and set a good example for other believers. His purpose was to help **"the weak"** (v.35). What kind of example do we set for non-believers? We must be unselfish hard workers. Otherwise our testimony looks unfinished. If you talk the talk, you must walk the walk, so the old saying goes.

Call to Commitment:

The last thirteen chapters of Genesis record the story of Joseph. His brothers sold him into bondage. He fell on hard times in Egypt. He remained faithful to God in the face of imprisonment, persecution, and temptation. God's hand was on Joseph through those difficult times and He opened the door for Joseph to be the Prime Minister of Egypt. His testimony has endured to this day.

What must we do if we wish to honour God with a good testimony? We must serve with humility, emotion, and diligence. We must have the right priorities and work hard unselfishly. Our lives should honour God and reach out to people who need to know God.

Concluding the Service:

In a home church, everyone has a responsibility to minister. That is true, of course, in larger churches as well. But in a home church, there is no way to hide. If everyone who claims Jesus as their Lord and Saviour is not assuming a part in the teaching, worshipping, fellowshiping, and ministering of the church, the church will soon lose its vitality. The very special dimension of the home church is this opportunity for shared leadership and ministry.

This is exciting. But it also places a responsibility on each member to seek God's power to develop the characteristics we have examined in today's study. Like Paul, we must seek to be faithful over time and in many different circumstances.

Sing prayerfully “My Life is In You, Lord” **Maranatha Praise**, Expanded 3rd Edition, # 120.