



1. Review: Can you see yourself as a part of the story of Acts so far? Where do you fit in?
  2. How do you think the elders need to take heed for (guard) themselves and the flock? (28)
  3. When you sing, “Standing on the Promises,” what promises do you think of?
  4. What are the “truths” of the gospel? Are they relevant to you in your day-to-day life? If so, how? If not, why not?
  5. What is the purpose of shepherding? (28) How can someone be shepherded with the truths of the gospel?
  6. Can you share any personal examples of how thinking through the gospel changed you and your actions after you were saved (justified)?
  7. How does the gospel relate to Paul’s challenge to the elders to admonish/pay attention, as he had done to them? (31)
  8. How would you take an admonition that someone intended to help you place your mind back on the truth? Where do you think our church needs to be admonished?
  9. Apply it: What are your next steps to get back on target?
  10. (If time): Can you share an example of how Jesus’ words in verse 35 have resulted in blessing to you?
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## An Essential Job, Part 2: Shepherding with the Gospel

### Leader Notes for Acts 20:28-36

We pick up our journey through Acts near the end of chapter 20, with Paul on his way to Jerusalem by ship at the end of his third missionary journey. Here he made a quick stop in the port city of Miletus to meet with the elders from the church of Ephesus – about 50 miles away.

Our last message on Acts, back in May, covered the first part of what Paul said to the elders. He briefly reviewed the three-year ministry he had in Ephesus (Acts 19), covering both how he served the Lord there and the opposition he faced. A key verse is 20:21, “solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” He had declared to them, “the whole purpose of God.” (20:27)

Paul then described the uncertain future he was about to face when he reached Jerusalem, with the Spirit indicating bonds and afflictions awaited him there. He was willing to face these things even at the risk of his life, to finish the ministry he had received from the Lord Jesus for the gospel. His attitude should be a comfort and exhortation to us in our day as we face uncertainties with how our society looks at Christians and what we believe.

In this week’s passage, Paul exhorted the elders to be on guard (take heed) for both themselves and their flock of believers. Verses 17 and 28 together is one place in the New Testament where we see the words “elders” and “overseers” being used interchangeably. Their job before God was to shepherd (feed) the church of God. That still holds true today. Note that it starts with the elders watching out for their own spiritual lives. Paul warns them that some will arise from among themselves to lead the flock astray, speaking perverse things. No one, not even an elder of a church, is immune from these snares of the devil! That gives all of us something we can pray for our elders.

This potential danger is why it is essential that all of us, both shepherds and those being shepherded, understand and hold fast to the truths of the gospel. Then no one can lead us astray with perverse things! See verses 21 and 32 to get started on listing some of the truths of the gospel for our discussion questions this week.

Verse 35 is interesting in that Luke gives a quotation by Paul of the Lord Jesus that is not found in any of the gospels: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” This should not be surprising, because Luke’s recording here in Acts is just as fully inspired as the writers of the gospels – of which he was one. We do not know when or where the Lord Jesus said this, but there is no reason to doubt its authenticity. When you think about what the Lord said here, how have you seen this promise to be true in your own life?

The passage concludes with an emotional good-bye, involving kneeling, praying, weeping, embracing, repeatedly kissing (maybe that’s not our 21<sup>st</sup> century American style), grieving, and accompanying. The Ephesians really loved this man Paul who had brought them the gospel! Let’s consider how we can show our appreciation for those who bring us the gospel message.

