



PASSING THE TORCH

Open it

1. Describe a time when you had to say goodbye to someone you loved, and you knew you'd likely never see them again. What caused the separation? How did you feel? What did you say?

Daily devotions

Day 1

TODAY'S THEME: EXPLORE IT

Read Acts 20:17–38

2. How would you summarize these verses?
3. What do you think the main point is of this passage? Why would God want us to have it?
4. What can you learn about our role as Christians and leaders in the Church?
5. What do you learn about God from these verses?
6. Do you have any questions after reading this passage of Scripture?

Day 3

TODAY'S THEME: PAUL'S DEFENSE

Read Acts 20:17–21, 33–35

Paul served and ministered to the Ephesians with his whole heart. But now that he knows he must say goodbye, he gives a defense of himself and his ministry before he leaves. I don't think this is a defense in the same sense of the kinds of defense that we give to our parents to try to get out of trouble, but more of an encouragement to them that he has fulfilled his mission to them. Imagine what it would be like if someone you loved, cared for, and relied on told you that they had to be moving on to somewhere else and you wouldn't see them anymore. Imagine the feeling of stress, like, "What am I going to do without you?!"

Paul reminds the leaders of the church that he had spent a lot of time with them and has taught them everything they need to know and that they are fully equipped to keep leading the church without Paul's help. They have all the tools necessary to carry the torch and keep advancing the gospel message.

9. What's so cool is that the church was still able to grow and thrive without Paul having to stay there and make everything happen. The ministry of the church wasn't dependent on Paul alone. What danger is there in a ministry in the church relying too much on one single person?

10. Imagine being the Ephesian leaders and hearing that you are never going to see Paul again, the man who introduced you to Jesus and taught you everything you know. How would you know if you have been fully equipped to carry on ministering to people? What tools are necessary to do this?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- Pray that God would continue to raise up new leaders in the church to carry on the ministry for many years to come!
- Pray that God might raise you up to lead others.
- Pray that God would use someone in your life to equip you to be a mature disciple of Jesus Christ who could also keep on developing more and more disciples.

Day 4

TODAY'S THEME: PAUL'S MISSION

Read Acts 20:22–25

Paul says goodbye because he knows where he is going. For a while now he has had his eyes set on getting back to Jerusalem so that he could present the church there with a gift and continue proclaiming Christ and the Kingdom of God when all the Jews would be traveling back to town. He's not sure exactly what's going to happen, but he knows that in every city he has been he has faced imprisonment and all sorts of trouble at the hands of the Jews, so he doesn't seem to have too high of hopes that going to the city of the Jews is going to go over very well.

But despite the high risk, Paul is eager to get there to finish the calling God has given him. His greatest joy is to "finish his course and the ministry he received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." And for that purpose and calling, Paul is willing to face any opposition, take any risk, and endure any trial in order that he might be a faithful servant to the One who called him.

11. What calling has God put on your life right now? If you aren't sure, how could you find out what calling He has for you?

12. What are some things that might distract you from staying focused and committed to God's calling in your life?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- That God would make His calling for you clear
- That God would give you strength and focus to stay with the calling He has given you

Day 5

TODAY'S THEME: PAUL'S ASSIGNMENT

Read Acts 20:26–28

Knowing that he isn't going to spend any more time with the church in Ephesus and that he is passing the torch to the leaders there, Paul has some final instructions for them. He urges them look after the members of their church and to care for them. In verses 26–27, Paul reminds them that they've been taught the full counsel of God. They have what they need, and from now on, it is their responsibility to lead and care for the members of their church.

The responsibility Paul is giving them is huge! These people belong to God. They have been bought with the blood of Christ and these leaders are to care for and shepherd them like a shepherd would his sheep. I begin to think of some of the things that a shepherd does for his sheep: he shows them the way, provides safety for them, feeds them, tends to their injuries and illnesses, cares for them, goes after them when they wander away, and so much more! Those are the things that the elders of the church are supposed to do for its members.

13. Why is it so important for the elders of the church to serve the members of the church in all these ways? What challenges might the elders face as they do these things? How can you help make their job easier?

14. Your small group leaders are kind of like your elders in the church. Their job is to care for and support you guys as you grow in your relationships with Christ. How can you be praying for your leaders (and the elders of the church) as they carry out these responsibilities?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here is something you could pray for today:

- Pray for your small group leaders and the elders of the church, that God would give them wisdom to lead well and a boldness to lead in what is right even when it's really hard!

Day 6

TODAY'S THEME: PAUL'S WARNING

Read Acts 20:29–31

Being a leader and elder in a church can be difficult at times. You have the responsibility to teach the people in the church about God, which means you need to study God's Word and know the truth about what it says. There will be times when things are difficult. You'll help lead people through the difficult times in their lives and you'll need to hold people accountable and lovingly call them out if they are living in sin.

Paul reminds the leaders of the church that there will be many things and many people who will be trying to pull people away from God and the church. They need to be alert and ready to protect the Christians in their church, just like a shepherd is ready to defend his flock from wolves, lions, and bears!

15. What are some things that pull people away from God and the church today?

What does Paul's warning call these people or these things?

16. What would you do if you saw one of your friends being pulled away from God?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✍ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- Pray that God would protect His church.
- Pray that God would give the leaders in the church boldness to not be afraid to ask hard questions and to lead when it's hard.
- Pray that God might be able to use you to help look out for your friends and be able to graciously hold them accountable as well.

Day 7

TODAY'S THEME: PAUL'S BLESSING

Read Acts 20:32, 36–38

Before Paul leaves for Jerusalem, he blesses his dear friends and brothers in Christ. He knows that it isn't just he who will help them fulfill the calling in their lives, but ultimately it is God who builds up His leaders through His Word. Paul commends these leaders to God and prays for them before he gets on the ship that will take him to Jerusalem. This is the last time Paul would see these friends. As he leaves, he puts them into God's hands to sustain and equip them for the many years of ministry that are before them.

We all have people in our lives that we look up to and rely on to help us out when we are unsure of what to do next or simply just when we need some encouragement. But at the end of the day, we need to all remember that it's really God who will build us up and care for us, and He will never leave us! There is a lot of peace in that, not just for us, but even for those around us.

17. Describe a time when someone really blessed you. What did they do? How did it make you feel?

How can you bless someone this week?

18. How can praying for someone really bless them?

I HAVE A QUESTION! ✎ Write it down so you can ask your leader or your parents!

PRAYER GUIDE ➤ Here are some things you could pray for today:

- Pray for someone you know who may be struggling in life right now.
- Pray for your small group leaders, that God would continue to build them up as leaders and mentors in your life!
- Pray for an opportunity to be a blessing for someone this week!