

Date: June 16, 2019

Text: Acts 20:1-38

Title: How to Make Disciples

Big Idea: Jesus calls us to devote our lives to producing healthy, mature, and fruitful disciples.

Zooming in On Discipleship

In Acts 20, Luke is zooming in on Paul's interactions with fellow believers, giving us an example of the kind of life Paul lived amongst the various churches he planted: it's a snapshot of Paul's face-to-face, life-on-life, on-the-ground Disciple Making ministry.

1. Disciple-Makers aim to encourage those they are discipling (see vv. 1, 2, 12, 31).

- *This entire chapter is a snapshot of Paul's ministry of encouragement.* This includes teaching and conversing for hours on end (vv. 7-12) and meeting with elders to admonish them in their roles and responsibilities (vv. 18-38).
- *These believers lived in constant threat of suffering and persecution.* In this context, Paul brings them encouragement. Living in a different context, how can we best "encourage one another"? See Hebrews 10:24.
- *Biblical encouragement is God-centered.* What do we mean by "encouragement"? Look at what the NT meant: Acts 20:32; 1 Thess. 2:11-12; Heb. 10:24.
- *The Spirit works through our giftings to encourage the church.* Note Paul's gift of teaching (v. 7) and of healing (vv. 10,12). How are you using your gifts to encourage the church?

2. Disciple-Makers intentionally sacrifice their time, reputation, and safety in order to make disciples.

- *Paul was intentional.* How many times does the term "intention" or "decided" show up in verses 1-16? Discipleship doesn't happen by accident.
- *Paul gave his time for the sake of Disciple-Making.* What did Paul do with his time, and what kind of time did he give to Disciple-Making? (see vv. 3 & 31). How much of your time do you use for Making Disciples? Do you see time as "money" or as "opportunity" for the Kingdom?
- *Paul flat out lived a sacrificial life.* He was willing to work hard (v. 35), go through trials (vv. 18-19), shed tears (v. 19, 31), and even lay down his life (v. 22-24) for the sake of the disciples. See also Philippians 2:17.

3. Disciple-Makers invest in fruit-bearing relationships.

- *The gospel bears fruit.* Read John 15:1-17. What kind of fruit is Jesus talking about? How does this fruit get produced? Disciple-making is a fruit-bearing enterprise. Healthy disciples produce healthy disciples, because the fruit of the gospel in our lives should be disciples of Jesus.
- *Fruitful disciple-making requires authentic and deep relationship.* Read verses 4-6. Who was Paul investing in? How? Read verses 36-38 and 1 Thess. 2:7-8. What kinds of relationships did Paul build with those he disciplined? What comes to your mind when you think about “investing in relationship”? Is it scary? Intimidating? Messy? Exciting? Disciple-making *requires* relational investment. How do you avoid it?

4. Disciple-Makers use any means available to teach the ways of Jesus to others.

- *Paul taught through proclamation.* See verses 7, 11, 20, 26-27. Paul was tireless in teaching the whole counsel of God. To disciple others is to open the Scriptures, to talk about the Bible, to explain doctrinal content, to share and impart understanding of the truths of the gospel and the ways of God. Do you have a good enough handle on the Scriptures to teach them to others? If not, how can you grow in this?
- *Paul taught with his life.* Read verses 19, 24, 31, 33-35. What kind of life did Paul live among them? How did this teach them? Read 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 and 11:1. Do you feel comfortable having others imitate your life? Why or why not?

Application

The take-away today is fairly simple. First, every follower of Jesus is a Disciple-Maker. This is by God’s design and command (Matthew 28:18-20; John 15:1-17). Our task, then, is to make disciples.

If you’ve never been disciplined (or mentored), pray for guidance, and ask someone in your Home Community to walk with you in discipleship!

If you’re not discipling (or mentoring) someone, ask God for forgiveness (if needed), and pray for guidance towards someone he would put in your life to begin a Disciple-Making relationship with. Begin by meditating on Paul’s example in Acts 20, the points we’ve drawn out of it, and then take action. Disciple someone!