



## **Unit 1: You on Mission**

**Sermon Series Title:** The Heart of a Disciple-Maker

**Sermon 4:** Customs of a Disciple-Maker

**Bible Passage:** Acts 20:26, 31-35

### **Background/Context**

Paul spent about three and a half years in Ephesus, training and teaching the church elders. He specifically provided them instructions that would assist the churches in expanding the gospel and in growing (vv. 28-35). Additionally, Paul revealed that he maintained a focused mindset regarding what was required of him as a disciple-maker and the customs he established in order to carry out His God-given responsibilities. After Paul finished instructing the elders, he prayed with them, cried with them, and kissed them (36-38).

### **A. A Holy Mindset (Acts 20:26, 32-33)**

Paul committed the elders to God. Disciples must be wrapped up, tied up, and tangled up with God. He must be the reason why we live and why we avoid certain things. Paul entrusted the elders to stay rooted and grounded in the Word of God. He knew that God's Word would build them up into effective disciples for the Master. Paul also knew that as disciple-makers they would reap an inheritance among those God used them to reach.

Following the blessing of the elders, Paul added words of exhortation. He admonished them to care for the needs of God's people without looking for material compensation. He declared that he was innocent of everyone's blood because he had declared the whole plan of God to them, meaning he had been faithful to proclaim the plan of salvation, including the coming judgment (v. 26). By doing so, no one could accuse him of failing to warn them.

Paul told the Corinthian church that he did not seek what they possessed, but he wanted them (2 Cor. 12:14). He possessed a holy mindset. As he ministered among God's people, he did not work looking for a reward from them. Paul knew that God would provide for him. He inserted the way he conducted himself to make an obvious distinction between him and the false apostles who were motivated by material gain (Rom. 16:17-18).

**Application Point:** What do you desire for your children or the children in your family? When you think of being successful, what are the things that come to mind? A holy mindset should always trump a secular mindset.

### **B. A Hard Work Mindset (Acts 20:31, 34)**

Paul explained to the leaders that he had a hard work mindset. First, he reminded them that he had labored with them and given them warnings for three years (v. 31). Second, using them as witnesses, he said, “You yourselves know that I worked with my own hands to support myself and those who are with me” (v. 34). This was a regular practice of Paul. He used his tent making skills to support himself and fellow workers. He explained his reasoning to the Thessalonian church: “...we did not eat anyone’s food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. It is not that we don’t have the right to support, but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us” (2 Thess. 3:8–9).

Paul worked hard in order to be an example to the body of Christ. Sure, he could have demanded the churches support. He told the church of Corinth, “If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?” (1 Cor. 9:11). It is proper for the church to support its leaders. However, Paul decided in his case it was more beneficial to work with his hands so that the gospel would not be hindered.

**Application Point:** How much time weekly do you work for the kingdom of God? How would you describe your church work ethic? How would others describe your church work ethic? Remember: Jesus knows and sees all.

### **C. A Humane Mindset (Acts 20:35)**

Paul shared with the Ephesian elders that he demonstrated to them in all things how to help those who were spiritually, financially, and emotionally weak. “...I’ve shown you that it is necessary to help the weak by laboring like this....” Helping others hurts. In order for Paul to share the gospel with those that needed it, he endured hardship. We must bear the infirmities of the weak and not please ourselves (Rom. 15:1). It might be easier to mind one’s own business, however God called us to pray, love, encourage, minister, edify, and teach one another.

Paul also gave the elders a message to encourage them when their patience was tested. Jesus fed multitudes. He healed those with infirmities. He delivered those that were demon possessed. He raised the dead. He gave His life so that others might live. He paid the taxes for Peter and Himself. All of these selfless actions exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9). Jesus’ life and Paul’s life affirm that it is indeed good to give sacrificially to help others in need.

**Application Point:** Paul, out of his personal earnings gave generously to the sick and needy. How do you give generously to others? How can you support those that may be spiritually or emotionally weak? The Holy Spirit can and will help you help others who are weak.