
[SERMON NOTES]

Acts – Week 20 (*Acts 20:20-31; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; James 4:14*)

The _____ is where most of life is _____.

If we can't find _____ and _____ in Jesus, it will never
_____ anywhere else.

Who you are _____ is more important than
what you _____.

What are you _____ or _____?

What are you _____?

[QUICK REVIEW]

Looking at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or something that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

[MY STORY]

Let's be honest, we all love a good sob story. You know, those stories where someone sacrifices it all for the person they love? Or those stories that move us to tears because of a romance that we were rooting for that ends up never having a chance. It breaks our hearts, because we know what it's like to have our hearts broken. **Share a time when you had your heart broken with the rest of the group.** Feel free to make this as light as someone taking that last piece of pie you wanted (you *know* it's the worst!) or as deep as the loss of a loved one or the ending of a meaningful relationship.

[DIGGING DEEPER]

This week we journeyed with Paul across areas he's been to before but will never again be able to return to. After all of his adventures and investment into the people of Asia Minor, he gathers

the Ephesian elders and sends them off with encouragement in person for the last time, which centers on the advice to keep watch over themselves—to guard themselves and their hearts for the sake of those they serve and lead. All throughout scripture we see language about the “heart.” Proverbs 4:23 tells us “above all else guard your heart.” We all understand what our biological heart organ is, but in common and biblical language it seems to mean something deeper. **When you hear the word ‘heart,’ what first comes to mind? How would you describe what the ‘heart’ is?**

Read these scriptures. What can you summarize about what scripture means when it talks about the heart? Why is it important?

Jeremiah 17:9-10

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Matthew 6:19-21

Proverbs 3:5-6

Matthew 5:8

The heart is that central part of us, the core of our being, that most deeply reflects our identity as image bearers of God. Some theologians use the concept of our ‘heart’ synonymously with the idea of our ‘spirit’ or our ‘will.’ It is the most foundational part of us that when turned to God, reflects his love to the world through our character and actions and when turned away from Him brings destruction and disorder. Scripture says that the heart is often ‘deceitful’ and in our sin it often leads us astray. As Paul suggests in Romans 7, a heart turned away from God has us doing what we don’t want to do and not being able to do what we do want to do. We can all resonate with this to some degree. **What are some bad habits that you wish you could break but you haven’t been able to? What are some things you wish you could do or become but they always seem out of reach?**

We learned in the message that our deepest desires are often not our strongest desires. The good news is that Jesus wants to give us the *true* desires of our hearts—our deepest desires for life and life abundant *with* God that often lie beneath our strongest desires for success and pleasure and comfort. Through obedient discipleship to Jesus and in partnership with the Spirit, we can truly know freedom and experience the Life God desires for us. **Read Galatians 6:7-10. What are practical ways that you can choose to sow to the Spirit in your life so that you will reap Eternal Life here and now?**

[WEEKLY READINGS]

Studies say that someone who reads their Bible 4 times or more a week improves their joy, happiness, contentment, and overall approval of their life. (*1 Tim. 4:8-10,16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17*). As a church, we believe that! Below are 4 passages of Scripture this week to dive into to pull deeper on our weekend’s message. We encourage you to take notes in your Bible, and ask yourself: *What does this teach me about God? Myself and others? And how do I follow Jesus better?*

Acts 20

Proverbs 4

Galatians 6

James 1