

WHY WE BELIEVE...

ACTS 20:28-32

January 28, 2024

BELONG

Get to Know One Another

Think back to the last time you had to say goodbye to someone knowing you weren't going to see them for a long time or ever again. What was that experience like? Why is it hard to say goodbye?

BELIEVE

Read this Week's Scripture

This week, we are going to discuss why membership in the local church matters. Our text this week is going to be in [Acts 20:28-32](#).

[Acts 20](#) is a very emotional chapter because Paul is leaving the church at Ephesus. As you read the chapter, it is obvious how heavy Paul's heart was as he considered the pending danger the church would face after his departure. He knew the enemy so well that he could say with certainty, *"I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."* He didn't say, "I think," "possibly," "maybe," or "who knows?" He said, "I know." So as Paul left Ephesus in [Acts 20](#) to go to Jerusalem, he was clear to the Ephesian elders to be on guard. Paul knew that although he had taught the elders *"the whole counsel of God,"* if they were not vigilant, they could still be deceived and led astray by the masters of deception – the false teachers.

Not only is this chapter a great reminder and exhortation to the elders of the church, but it is a great reminder to all members of the local church. Our membership in the local church is so much more than having our name on a roll or voting rights [concerning the matter of church business]. Our role as a church member is to recognize the Word of God, protect the Word of God and teach the Word of God in full. While doing this, the local church gives glory to God, they grow in community, they discover how they are equipped to serve, and they engage the world around them with the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Have someone in your group read [Acts 20:28-32](#).

BUILD

Engage and Apply the Scripture

Question 1: Discuss in class. Do you believe that membership in the local church is *important*?

- Do you believe membership in the local church is *necessary*? If so, why or why not?

Question 2: Mark Dever describes church membership as an *"...union between a particular church and a Christian, which consist of the church's affirmation of the Christian's gospel profession, the church's promise to give oversight to the Christian, and the Christian's promise to gather with the church and submit to its oversight."*

- Does this description of church membership make membership in the local church more appealing or less appealing? Why?

Question 3: In **verse 28**, Paul is describing the church as a “flock,” and that the elder’s job is to care for and oversee the “flock” - the flock of course being the church.

- What role can you play in helping and supporting the elders in their responsibilities at First Baptist?
- What are some ways that the elder’s care and oversee the church as a shepherd care for his flock? [The feed, lead and protect]
- What are visible some ways you see the elders at First Baptist feeding, leading or protecting the members?

Question 4: How does the phrase **“He obtained [it] with His own blood”** show us the value of the church?

- Should this effect the way we look at our own church membership? How?

Question 5: What does this passage teach us about the role of spiritual “wolves”?

- What are the characteristics of these “wolves”? [They will arrive after Paul leaves, they will come in among the flock/ membership, they do not spare the flock/ body, they can arise from the elders, and they draw people away from the faith.]

Question 6: **Verse 31** seems to imply that consistent teaching in the Word of God helps to keep the church membership [the flock] alert and prepared to battle the “wolves.”

- How can members of First Baptist - the flock - prepare to recognize “wolves” and do battle against “wolves”?
- Do you think the membership at First Baptist would recognize “wolves” if they were among us?

Question 7: Explain how **verse 32** should provide comfort and assurance to the local church and its members?

- According to Paul, what is the “Word of His grace” able to do? [build you up and give you an inheritance]
- Are you in the Word daily and even more is that word in you?

BEGIN

Response and Prayer

At the end of the conversation, spend some time praying as a group. Here are some prompts:

- Spend some group time-sharing requests and praying specifically for them.
- Spend some time praying for FBC and that we would be encouraged and hopeful in how God is working in and through FBC Portland.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Blue Letter Bible: **Acts 20:** Check out the QR code to learn more.



Precept Austin: **Acts 20:** Check out the QR code to learn more.

