

## Leaders, Community and the Gospel

### Acts 20:17-38

As we go through Acts we are seeing how the gospel changed the society and culture of the day. Today people reject Christianity – without knowing the real thing. This passage tells us what the real thing looks like – and why it can still turn the world upside down.

#### **A Different Type of Leader**

The key verse is Paul's call to the elders to pay careful attention to themselves and to the flock. The idea of Servant Leadership is popular in the work place, but often leadership is more about the leader than serving the people he leads.

When Paul says the leader must care for himself he does not mean 'put your own interests first'. He means feed and nourish your own soul in God, so you can do the same for others. When he uses the word 'care for' he uses a word that means 'to shepherd.' Just as the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, so Christian leaders should lay down their lives for the flock.

But why does Paul gather these leaders? He has a vision for how the church should really be. He's looking for a different kind of leader for a different kind of society.

#### **A New Community**

Many people today long for a different kind of society: one that is tolerant, and where everyone is able to experience love. The problem is that their world-view will never give them that.

Instead, what Paul talks about here did and will result in a radically different kind of community where both truth and love flourish.

- 1. A community where the truth of the gospel, not confusion, is the defining message.**
- 2. A community marked by humility in place of pride.**
- 3. A community where hope abounds, even in the face of uncertainty.**
- 4. A community is one where generosity flourishes in place of selfishness.**
- 5. A community where there is love in place of discord.**

But how are we supposed to build such a community?

#### **The Way There.**

How can we serve sacrificially? Because Christ served us sacrificially.

How can we be a community marked by humility? When we realise that Christ humbled himself for us. Because the gospel humbles us deeply.

How can we be a people of hope in the face of uncertainty? Because we know that our future is safe in the hands of Christ.

How can we kill our selfishness and be a community marked by generous giving? Because God is the greatest giver. He gave himself.

How can we be a place where love flourishes? Because the gospel tells us we are more loved than we could ever hope. And so is our neighbour.

When the gospel really is the message that defines us, we will be so radically different from the world that we could turn it upside down (again).