

# Dwelling in the Word

## Acts 20.17-38

<sup>17</sup> From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. <sup>18</sup> When they came to him, he said to them:

'You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. <sup>20</sup> I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus. <sup>22</sup> And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. <sup>24</sup> But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.'

<sup>25</sup> 'And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, <sup>27</sup> for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. <sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. <sup>29</sup> I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears. <sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup> You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. <sup>35</sup> In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

<sup>36</sup> When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed. <sup>37</sup> There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship.

*Bible verses are from the New Revised Standard Version*

# How to dwell in the Word

Dwelling in the Word is a process that many people in the Diocese of Oxford are using to listen to scripture, to each other and to God. It's not about sharing information or seeking scholarly answers or even the right answers to the issues raised in the text, but it is about listening each other into free speech and discerning what God is up to amongst us.

Have copies of this sheet available at every meeting so that the verses overleaf can be read by different people each time you meet. You should set aside, without apology, at least 20 minutes for this activity. Dwelling in the Word is far from magical or formulaic; it won't solve all the problems or answer all the questions, difficulties and issues your group, council or committee has to address. However, over time, this discipline forms a community of the Holy Spirit, where the Spirit is as welcome and expected a presence as anyone else there.

- Start with prayer inviting the Spirit to guide your attending to the Word of God.
- When everyone is ready, begin with one person reading the passage out loud to the group.
- Now let some silence unfold as people let the words have their impact. Notice where your attention lingers. This might be a word or a phrase.
- Ask a second person to read the passage out loud once more.
- Each person in the group finds someone they know less well and listens to that person as s/he says what they heard in the passage. What captured their imagination in the passage and what would they like to find out more about? Each person should listen well as they will be asked to report back to the rest of the group (or another pairing if you're a large group) what their partner said.
- What have you heard that might be significant? Discuss as a group what God might be up to in the passage for your group on that day. It can be helpful for the facilitator to make a brief note of what she or he hears from the group and to capture that in a short prayer at the end.
- Finally, let people know that as your conversation on other matters continues, anyone at any time may call for the Gospel and the group will return to the passage.

God of gentleness and love  
Draw near to us as we draw near to you  
Dwell in every heart and conversation  
Fashion in us the likeness of your Son,  
Jesus Christ.

Help us to discern together all that you  
are calling us to be  
And all that you are calling us to do.

Assist us, by your Spirit, to become a  
more contemplative,  
more compassionate and more  
courageous Church  
For the building of your kingdom and  
the glory of your Son.

Amen

Dwelling in the Word is not the only way to study scripture, but if you'd like to find out more then *Dwelling in the Word - A Pocket Handbook* is available to purchase from [churchmissionsociety.org/resources/dwelling-word-pocket-handbook](http://churchmissionsociety.org/resources/dwelling-word-pocket-handbook)

**Dwelling in the Word. So that the Word begins to dwell in you.**