

# 2

## Hard & Painful Decisions

*Acts 20:17—21:14*

“We are not necessarily doubting,” said C. S. Lewis, “that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be.”

GROUP DISCUSSION. Describe a time when God’s best has been painful for you. How has this experience affected you?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Do you ever fear God’s will? When and why?

The apostle Paul made a momentous decision to return to Jerusalem. Even though many Christians urged Paul not to go and warned him that he would be arrested in Jerusalem, still Paul remained convinced that this was what he should do. As he traveled, he made several brief stops to visit friends, explain his decision and say farewell. *Read Acts 20:17—21:14.*

---

1. If you had been in Paul’s position, would you have gone to Jerusalem? Why or why not?

**2.** For Paul, what were the issues involved in his decision to go to Jerusalem?

---

**3.** What do you find admirable about Paul's convictions?

---

**4.** How are your convictions similar to or different from Paul's?

---

**5.** What price have you had to pay for your convictions?

---

**6.** If God wanted Paul to go to Jerusalem, why did the Holy Spirit give so many warnings not to go?

**7.** How did Paul's meetings with various communities of disciples encourage and prepare him to enter Jerusalem?

---

**8.** How has God encouraged and prepared you for difficult times in your life?

---

**9.** Many Christians expect God's will to be the most pleasant and trouble-free alternative, but from Paul's experience, that is apparently not so. What would be a better criteria for interpreting God's will?

---

**10.** In your decision-making process, have you usually been more concerned about personal comfort or following God? How has this been shown?

11. Verse 14 says that in the end, the disciples “gave up and said, ‘The Lord’s will be done.’” Why is it so often difficult to give in to the Lord’s will?

---

12. What are you having difficulty giving up to God’s will?

*Pray for each person in your group who is facing a difficult or painful decision.*

### **Now or Later**

A vivid description of someone facing a painful decision is found in the story of Jesus at Gethsemane. *Read Mark 14:32-42.*

Compare and contrast Jesus’ decision to go to the cross with Paul’s decision to go to Jerusalem.

What encouragement do Jesus’ and Paul’s examples give you for facing your own painful choices?

What do you learn from these stories about how to encourage a friend who is facing a painful decision?