

SESSION 13

Purpose

ROMANS 15:14-21,30-33

BELIEVERS ARE TO BE INTENTIONAL ABOUT MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TO ALL PEOPLE.



We recognize the importance of being intentional about our health—brushing our teeth, paying attention to what we eat, and staying active. We try to show that same intentionality in our work by getting up when the alarm goes off and arriving on time. Likewise, as believers we are to be intentional about making Christ known to all people.

WHICH AREAS OF YOUR LIFE COME MORE NATURALLY WHEN IT COMES TO BEING INTENTIONAL, AND WHICH AREAS REQUIRE MORE EFFORT OR DISCIPLINE?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In chapters 1–11 of Romans, Paul focused on the core doctrines of justification and reconciliation. Then, in chapters 12–14, he turned to the practical implications of the gospel for everyday living. As he brought his letter to a close, the apostle returned once more to the theme of salvation—but from a different angle. Earlier, he emphasized that all people need a Savior; now he highlighted the responsibility believers have to share the good news of salvation with others.

Paul's purpose was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He explained his calling to the Romans so that they might join him in fulfilling it. He could not take any credit for his past ministry. Christ had accomplished it using him, as evidenced by signs and wonders. In the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul had preached the gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum. Paul's aim now was to take the gospel beyond Rome and into regions untouched by its message (Rom. 15:20–29). Knowing he could not fulfill this mission alone, he appealed to the believers in Rome for support. While financial help may have

been included, Paul's primary request was for their prayers. He asked them to pray for deliverance from unbelieving Jews in Judea, that his ministry would be acceptable to the believers there, and that he would complete his journey to Rome one day (15:30–33).

As he concluded his letter, Paul recognized a number of fellow believers who had faithfully partnered with him in ministry (16:1–16). Though he had never visited Rome, he had met some of its church members during his travels, and he wanted them to know how much he valued them. He ended with a final warning (16:17–18) and a closing blessing (16:19–27).



14 My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of **goodness**, **A** filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another. **15** Nevertheless, I have written to remind you more boldly on some points because of the **grace given me** **B** by God **16** to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a **priest** **C** of the gospel of God. God's purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **17** Therefore I have **reason to boast** **D** in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God. **18** For I would not dare say anything except what Christ has accomplished through me by word and deed for the obedience of the Gentiles, **19** by the power of **miraculous signs and wonders**, **E** and by the power of God's Spirit. As a result, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to **Illyricum**. **F**

20 My aim is to preach the gospel **where Christ has not been named**, **G** so that I will not build on someone else's foundation, **21** but, as it is written, Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand. [. . .]

30 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to **strive together with me** **H** in prayers to God on my behalf. **31** Pray that I may be **rescued from the unbelievers in Judea**, **I** that my ministry to [q] Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, **32** and that, by God's will, I may come to you with joy and be refreshed together with you. **33** May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

A. Moral excellence and virtue that is lived out in a meaningful way. The word emphasizes action.

B. Paul's authority was the result of God's grace, not anything he earned or achieved on his own.

C. Priests brought offerings to God. Paul's offering included Gentiles who had been redeemed by Jesus and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

D. Paul would never boast in his own accomplishments. Rather, he boasted in what Christ had done through his ministry (v. 18).

E. The supernatural things God accomplished through Paul validated the gospel, as well as his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles.

F. A region along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea. This marked the northeastern extent of Paul's travels and includes modern-day Albania.

G. Paul was setting his sights on pioneer regions. He wanted to minister to unreached people.

H. Paul recognized the value of spiritual partnerships and asked for the Romans' prayers for his work.

I. The apostle had a sense that he would face stiff persecution in Judea. This opposition eventually would bring him to Rome.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Joint Ministry

(Rom. 15:14-16)

Believers are to join with others in ministry.

- **What is our responsibility in becoming spiritually ready to minister to others?**

2. Spirit's Power

(Rom. 15:17-21)

Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel.

- **Where do you sense God's Spirit inviting you to attempt something that will fail unless He supplies the power? What is the first step of obedience?**

3. Focused Prayer

(Rom. 15:30-33)

Believers need to pray for the spread of the gospel.

- **What do believers stand to gain when they unite in prayer for the sharing of the gospel?**

Apply the Text

Discuss with your Bible study group why believers need to work together in sharing the gospel with unreached people around the world and around the corner. Consider ways your group or church can be involved in doing this.

KEY DOCTRINE:

Cooperation

Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. (See Philippians 1:5; 4:15-16.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Create a chart to better understand a Bible passage.

Read the following verses and determine how prayer influences sharing one's faith: Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 4:29-31; Romans 10:1; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1. How would you summarize the role of prayer in evangelism? In what ways do these verses motivate you to pray for your sharing of the gospel and those who are taking the gospel to the unreached?

TALK IT OUT

Focus on Romans 15:30. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase “we’re in this together”?

Paul requested the Roman believers pray for him and his ministry in Jerusalem. He asked them to pray for deliverance from unbelieving Jews in Judea, that his ministry would be acceptable to the believers there, and that he would complete his journey to Rome one day.

What does it look like to “strive together” in prayer rather than just offering occasional or casual prayers?

Ministry is not meant to be carried out in isolation but through shared effort, especially prayer. Paul asked the Roman believers to join him by “striving together” in prayer, showing that prayer is an active partnership in God’s work. Even when believers cannot physically go or take the lead, they can still participate meaningfully by praying for those who do, trusting God to use those prayers to accomplish His purposes and strengthen His servants.

In what ways can your group better view and practice prayer as active partnership in God's mission?

Memorize Romans 15:30, considering how you can put this verse into practice.

Prayer Requests / Notes

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Romans 15:14-16

Notice how Paul described the Roman believers.

Paul called the believers in Rome his “brothers and sisters,” even though he had never met many of them. He expressed his sincere appreciation for them. He was convinced they were “full of goodness” and “filled with all knowledge.” Also, they demonstrated their ability to “instruct one another.” In these ways, they reflected their spiritual growth and the character of Christ.

Nevertheless, Paul knew they still had room for growth. He could not allow himself to overlook his obligation as an apostle to remind them of the areas to which they still needed to give attention. His goal was to help them become more like Jesus.

God had called Paul to be “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.” He compared his ministry with the Gentiles to the work of a priest. In the Old Testament, priests spoke on behalf of God. Paul saw his responsibility in a similar way. Additionally, priests presented offerings. Paul embraced that metaphor. He wanted to present as many Gentile believers as possible to God as “an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”

Who is one believer you will affirm this week for his or her spiritual growth, and what specifically will you say or do?



Day 2: Romans 15:17-19

Identify what Paul boasted in—and what he refused to boast in.

Paul never bragged about his accomplishments as a minister of the gospel. He understood that anything that had been done was accomplished by Christ working through him. Therefore, he had “reason to boast in Christ.” He wanted the Romans to know that if they chose to support him, they would be supporting Christ’s work. Paul was not promoting his own personal agenda. Today, we recognize the impact of Paul’s ministry. Perhaps the Romans understood it as well, even in the first century. Nevertheless, Paul demonstrated his humility in giving all the credit to Christ.

Notice the word *power* used twice in this verse. Many “miraculous signs and wonders” were accomplished through Paul. Some of these are recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 20:9-12). Paul knew these were accomplished by “the power of God’s Spirit.”

Paul was able to say that he had “fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.” Of course, he was not claiming that everyone in these vast regions had heard the gospel. Rather, he was saying that he had saturated these regions with the gospel. Jerusalem was the place that Christianity began, and Illyricum was a Roman province between Greece and Italy in modern-day Albania on the Adriatic Sea.

How do these verses shape your understanding of success in ministry?



Day 3: Romans 15:20-21

Pay attention to Paul's aim.

Paul's desire was to "preach the gospel where Christ has not been named." Though he sometimes revisited cities where he previously had shared the gospel (Acts 15:36), he understood that his main mission was to take the gospel to unreached people. He wanted to preach in Rome, which had heard of Jesus, but his ultimate goal was to preach in Spain (Rom. 15:24,28). His desire to take the gospel to where it had never been heard was the reason he did not want to "build on someone else's foundation." This was not his calling (1 Cor. 3:10).

In verse 21, Paul quoted Isaiah 52:15 to emphasize the importance of his plan. This verse in Isaiah says that the kings of many nations "will see what had not been told them, and they will understand what they had not heard." He clearly saw this as a reference to the salvation of the nations. Paul knew that many would respond to the gospel if they were given the opportunity, and he wanted to be God's instrument for giving them that opportunity.

Where do you sense God's Spirit inviting you to attempt something that will fail unless He supplies the power? What is the first step of obedience?



Day 4: Romans 15:30-31

Identify Paul's specific prayer request.

Paul planned to carry the gospel as far as Spain, and he hoped the Roman believers would partner with him in that mission (Rom. 15:22-24). Before traveling to Rome, however, he intended to go to Jerusalem to deliver a financial gift collected by Gentile believers for those in need. After completing that task, he would continue to Rome. Knowing the challenges that awaited him in Jerusalem, Paul urged his brothers and sisters in Rome to "strive" in prayer for him. The word translated *strive* is the word from which we get our word "agonize." It also has the prefix "together" attached to it. Prayer is a way of joining others who are taking the gospel to the unreached people of the world.

Paul understood that traveling to Jerusalem would be dangerous. He knew that unbelievers there would try to put a stop to his ministry. He asked the Roman believers to pray that he would be rescued from any of their attempts to silence him. He also asked them to pray for the Jewish believers who would receive the financial gift collected by Gentile Christians. Paul referred to these Jewish believers as "saints"—people set apart to God as holy. They had been set apart when they placed their faith in Christ. Paul hoped they would receive the offering with gratitude, recognizing the sincere care shown to them by Gentile brothers and sisters.

How can prayer deepen your partnership with other believers in the work of ministry?



Day 5: Romans 15:32-33

Note the role God's will played in Paul's plans.

Paul shared yet another prayer request with the believers in Rome. He asked them to pray that he would be able to travel to Rome and spend time with them. He anticipated that once he arrived, their fellowship would bring him joy and their time together would be refreshing.

Incidentally, God answered all three parts of Paul's request. In Jerusalem, God protected him from danger (Acts 23:10). Jewish believers received him warmly (21:17-20). And ultimately, Paul set sail for Rome (25:11-12).

Paul didn't stop at asking the Roman believers to pray for him. He also offered a benediction—a prayer for their wellbeing. The believers in Rome lived in a dangerous period of the empire's history. At any moment they could be expelled from the city, or worse, arrested simply because they followed Christ. Knowing this, Paul committed them to God's care. Only God could sustain them and enable them to live in peace. Of course, experiencing that peace required them to trust God. They already had peace with Him through their faith in Christ. Now Paul longed for them to be filled with the confidence of God's peace as they faced the uncertainties of their daily lives.

How can you be a source of joy and refreshment to others?

APPLY THE TEXT

As you live out your call to serve Christ intentionally by sharing the gospel with others, who is praying for you? How much will you trust the power of God's Spirit as you talk with others about Jesus?

JOURNAL



LEADER HELPS

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, challenge the group to act on that passage, and encourage them to reflect more deeply in the week that follows. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Read the Bible passage for the coming session, and review Understand the Context and Key Words.
- If a QR code is available in the Leader Helps, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage.

Through the Week

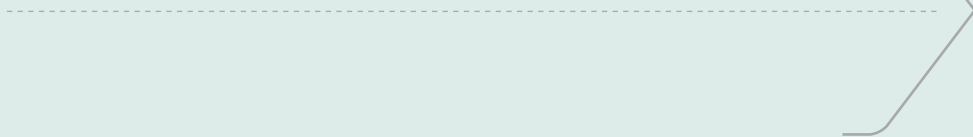
- Ask God to use the Daily Explorations to help you understand and apply the lesson to your life.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text sections for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.
- Start gathering items you may use in the group time.

The Day before Group Study Time

- Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Review the first four pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session.
- Review your responses and notes from the completed Daily Explorations.
- Listen to the weekly podcast at goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training.
- Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided in the Digital Download for the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Consult *QuickSource* for additional insights and ideas.
- Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).
- Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered including extra copies of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for guests.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early. The group time begins when the first person arrives so make sure that is you.
- Pray for the study and the group.
- Adjust the room as needed.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.



After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact the group, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, individuals in the group, and Scripture.
- Pray for specific needs of people in the group.
- Do it all again, asking God to open you mind and heart to His Word this week.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **VISIT THEM.** Deliver a copy of the Daily Discipleship Guide to every person in your group.
- **ASK THEM.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.” It’s a question disguised as a statement, so it’s not as threatening.
- **TELL THEM.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **SHOW THEM.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **INVITE THEM.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can’t make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Talk It Out is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
 - Allow the group to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
 - Allow the smaller groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
 - You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
 - Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new people and guests.
 - As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.
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Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
 - Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
 - Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
 - Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
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Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. People in your group need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader. You can make a difference in the growth of individuals and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here's how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **STEP 1:** Prior to group time, ask a potential leader to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You're just coaching your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way.
- **STEP 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **STEP 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **STEP 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **STEP 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **STEP 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group.
- **STEP 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.