



The Book of  
**ROMANS**

**Small Group Study 4: Romans 12–16**

# Week Five: Romans 15:14–33

## Key Verses

- “Therefore I have reason to boast in Christ Jesus regarding what pertains to God.” - Romans 15:17 (CSB)

## Key Principles

- Paul was eager to fulfill his mission because the assignment was given by the God he loved.
- People are the mission.
- Like Paul, we are called to love God deeply, do whatever it takes to reach all people, care for our local church, and support other Christians who share in this ministry.

## Read

Paul’s desires fueled his ministry. After all, Paul had personal motivations for writing Romans, as this is a letter to people he cared about deeply (Romans 15:14–16:27)! This week’s study of Romans 15:14–33 demonstrates that Paul’s ministry was motivated by three loves—a love for God, a love for unbelievers, and a love for his brothers and sisters in Christ.

First, Paul’s ministry flows out of his love for God; **he was eager to fulfill his mission because the assignment was given by the God he loved.** The calling Paul received from God in an instant (Acts 9) defined all the activity of his life after that moment. God’s call on Paul’s life would motivate Paul to travel the world, stand up to potentially violent opposition, take risky journeys, and change his vocation from Pharisee to Christian missionary. And the vision Paul received in Acts 9 was just the beginning of an ongoing relationship with God in Christ. So, when Paul needed guidance, he continually looked to the Holy Spirit and God’s written Word (Romans 15:21; Isaiah 52:15).

Paul’s love for God can also be seen through Paul’s confident and enthusiastic tone in Romans 15:16–23. In verses 16–17, Paul speaks of his ministry as an offering to God and something he can be proud of in God’s sight. What is it that allows him to make such audacious claims without being inappropriately boastful? It’s simple: Paul knows that all of the glory belongs to Christ! Paul has been a faithful vessel. It is the gospel of Christ that has power to save, not any of Paul’s words or deeds added to Christ’s work. Here is what is encouraging for us: As believers, we also have access to the same power through the Holy Spirit. This means that we can have the same boldness in sharing the gospel with our families,

friends, neighbors, and co-workers. We can stand confidently on God's power to reach all people, just as Paul did!

Second, Paul's ministry included a genuine love for the lost. Paul loved the Roman church, but his commitment to share the gospel with unbelievers prevented him from visiting Rome on many occasions (15:22–23). Paul loved non-Christians so much that he pleaded with them, changed his plans for them, and faced persecution so that they would hear and be saved. Paul's ministry calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles meant that Paul dedicated his time, talent, and treasure to "preach the gospel where Christ has not been named" (15:20). Paul's ministry featured an obvious concern for lost people.

Third, Paul's ministry displayed a deep love for other Christians. In the bookends of our target passage (15:14, 30), Paul calls the church in Rome his "brothers"—an inclusive term that meant both brothers and sisters. We see Paul's love displayed for the Roman church in his longing to visit them (15:23) and how he hopes to see them (15:24). He desires to serve them (15:24, 32). He affirms the Roman church's growth in their faith (15:14), he enjoys their company (15:24), and he is refreshed by them (15:32). Paul may be remembered for being a great theologian and missionary, but Romans 15:14–33 shows us what we see elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts 20:17–38)—Paul loved his fellow Christians deeply. And he understood that **people are the mission.**

Paul tried to pass on this love for the family of God to the churches he founded. Paul hopes that his legacy includes care and concern for healthy relationships between Jews and Gentiles in the local church (Romans 9–11; 14:1–15:13). He believes the church should be marked by a genuine love and concern for each other (Romans 12:9–21). But here in Romans 15:14–33, this genuine love takes on a new dimension—Paul asks that believers from different regions contribute financially to help Christians with physical needs. To do this, Paul uses the language of "blessing."

Those who have received the spiritual blessings of the gospel should seek ways to be generous towards their brothers and sisters in Christ, even going so far as to say that the believers in Macedonia and Achaia "owe it to them" (15:27 ESV). What does Paul mean by "owe"? The apostles from the church in Jerusalem strengthened Gentile churches through their ministry and spiritual edification. So, when the Jerusalem church experienced famine, it was appropriate for the Gentile churches to provide financial gifts (material blessing), when they had been recipients of spiritual gifts. In essence, Paul is saying that those who have benefited from the spiritual blessings of others should be generous with material gifts as well.

**Like Paul, we are called to love God deeply, do whatever it takes to reach all people, care for our local church, and support other Christians who share in this ministry.** The gospel transforms us into people who are burdened for our families, neighbors, friends, and the nations who have never heard or believed. When we were spiritually needy, God did not withhold from us and bestowed upon us the greatest of all gifts—granting us salvation in Christ and restoration with God. As a people who received a generous gift when we were in need, the gospel motivates us to joyfully meet the needs of others, whether the need is physical or spiritual. The same gospel and the same ministry of Paul has been given to all those in Christ.

Paul's love for others in his ministry presents several challenges to us. Church leaders, do we study theology to serve people in the church? Small groups, do we weep and pray for each other in hard times? Do we share joy, refresh each other, and build each other up? Christians, do we schedule our time in ways that allow us to talk to God and fulfill the specific roles he has given us in his mission? Is our evangelism motivated by a genuine care and concern for others? May our lives be devoted to relationships the way that Paul's was: radically oriented to loving God, the church, and the unbelieving world.

## Study Guide

The following study questions are meant to help us wrestle with the text of Romans and see how the gospel displays God's righteousness. Set aside some time this week to meet with God and answer these questions for yourself. Complete each question *before* your weekly small group meeting. Then, when you gather with your small group, be prepared to discuss your answers together.



**Read Romans 1:16–17 to remain focused on Paul's major points. Then, read Romans 15:14–33 in preparation for this week's study.**

### Highlight

Underline the phrases in Romans 15:14–33 that describe Paul's ministry.

Circle the phrases in Romans 15:14–33 that indicate how Paul feels about the Roman church.

Paul expresses his desires for local churches in Romans 12–16. According to Romans 15:14–33, what does Paul hope will happen in and among churches?

Highlight any Old Testament quotations in Romans 15:14–33. Where are they from? Go back and read those verses in their Old Testament context.

## Explain

In Romans 15:16, Paul says, "My purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." How would you explain this sentence in your own words?

Paul claims, "I have reason to be proud of my work for God" (15:17 ESV). In other New Testament passages, Paul gives warnings about boasting in anything except the Lord (Romans 3:27; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17). Why might it be appropriate for him to boast of his ministry here in Romans 15:17?

In Romans 15:21, Paul paraphrases Isaiah 52:15 (with a slight change). Go back and read Isaiah 52:7–53:12. How is Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled, and what is Paul's role in this fulfillment?

Christians in Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution to the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26–27). These verses also say that the churches "are indebted to" the believers in Jerusalem. Why does Paul ask Gentile Christians to contribute to the needs of the Jerusalem church?

## Apply

Romans 15:14–33 teaches us about Paul’s ministry and the way he viewed it as a gift given to him by God. How is God calling you to minister the gospel to others in this season of your life?

Paul repeats the ideas that he’s proud of the work he’s done for the gospel (15:17) and that he’s fulfilled the ministry to which he has been called (15:17–19). What would it look like for you to say you were proud of your ministry as Paul was?

In Romans 15:14–33, the actions of Paul’s ministry (efforts to share the gospel verbally and in his writings) spring from his desires—love for God and love for those he is serving in ministry. What would it look like for you to make love for God and love for others a bigger priority in your life and ministry?

How do the ideas Paul presents in Romans 15:14–33 encourage us to live a generous lifestyle? In response to Romans 15:14–33, how is God leading you to be generous with your time, talent, and treasure?

## Respond in Prayer

Each week of this study guide will include a recommended Scripture passage that helps us focus on the faithfulness of our great God. Set aside some time this week to read through the selected passage and use the prayer prompts below as your guide. We recommend praying through this passage on your own at home *and* together with your small group.

### **This Week's Prayer Passage: Romans 15:14–33**

Read Romans 15:14–33

Pray through the following prompts, according to the A.C.T.S. method.

- **Adoration:** Praise God because he is the God of peace, and he will overcome the chaos in the world when he brings his peaceful kingdom (15:33). Praise God because he is the One who hears our prayers. He is transcendent and yet near enough to hear our individual concerns (15:30).
- **Confession:** Paul has written boldly to the Romans to establish their faith firmly in the truth of the gospel and to challenge them to live out their faith with integrity. Confess to the Lord the times you have missed the opportunity to preach the gospel to others (15:20, 31). Confess your lack of boldness due to fear, misplaced priorities, or whatever else has kept you from speaking truth.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God that the power to save is his alone. Thank him that he accomplishes the task of salvation through our words and deeds, but that the power rests with his Spirit (15:17–19).
- **Supplication:** The believers in Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to contribute to the poor in Jerusalem, understanding that they “owed” material blessings to those who had been the means of their spiritual blessings in Christ and the gospel. Ask God to show you whom he has placed in your life that you can bless with the gospel. Ask him for the boldness to speak and share. Ask for his power to change the heart of your One to repent and believe in the gospel.