

Conclusion

Paul worked hard to develop leadership in local churches, and in the Lord's worldwide mission. Although he was the 'apostle to the gentiles', he didn't hold this work to himself, but drew many others into the same work. It is a work that must continue to be shared until the Lord returns – a work in which we all share.

1. What gifts and abilities do you have that can be used in the ministry of the gospel?

2. How are you using them at present? How could you be using them in the future?

3. Have you ever considered the possibility of using your gifts and abilities to serve the Lord in another country or culture? Why/why not?

Encourage people to be honest – it is not wrong to say they haven't considered it – people will be at different stages in their Christian walk.

Finish the meeting by praying about the things you have learned, and asking the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest field.

go

ROMANS 15 & 16

leader's notes

Introductory Brainstorm

Do you have a special concern for a particular missionary or mission organisation? Why? What has caused you to identify with that person/organisation in that way?

Read Romans 15:23-33

Paul's life and ministry were dominated by Jesus' command to him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:20-22; 26:15-18). He was responsive to the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1-3; 16:6-10) but he also planned his work carefully – most notably planting churches in the major cities of ancient Greece and Turkey. These churches then become centres for mission to their surrounding region. We see him at work planning for his mission again in Romans 15.

1. What plans do you see Paul making in Romans 15:23-33?

- *He is planning to go to Spain*
- *He is planning to visit Rome on his way to Spain*
- *But first, he is going to Jerusalem*

2. Why was he planning to visit these places?

Spain: *To begin a new evangelistic/church planting work in the area (v. 17-21)*

Rome: *To 'enjoy their company and be mutually encouraged (v. 24, 29 see also 1:11-12). Rome would also provide an important support base for his mission in Spain.*

Jerusalem: *To take the money gathered from the gentile churches to support the poor in Jerusalem. By this, Paul also hopes to build the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile churches – “pray that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there.”*

3. “Mission Agencies should only be concerned with evangelism, they shouldn't be involved in aid and development.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What do Paul's plans tell us about his understanding of his mission?

This question may raise significant issues for people – encourage them to not only state their own ideas, but come back to the passage and understand Paul's concerns.

Paul shows he is concerned both for primary evangelism, and for the physical and spiritual state of the church and believers.

4. How did Paul ask the Roman Christians to support his ministry?

- *By being an encouragement to him as he goes to Spain.*
- *By praying for him, especially about the plans he has told them about (v. 30-33)*
- *By welcoming his messenger Phoebe, and giving her whatever help she may need (16:2).*

5. How do you support your partners in mission (missionaries)? In your small group, how can you more effectively support one (or more) of your partners in mission?

Make sure you give time to this question and encourage people to give practical and achievable answers.

Read Romans 16:1-16

In Chapter 16 Paul sends greetings to people he knows among the Roman Christians, 28 people in all. Many of them are named as 'fellow workers'. This was a title Paul used to refer to his circle of assistants in ministry, those who worked with him in the proclamation of the gospel, either locally (within a local church), or globally (as part of his mission team). These 'fellow workers' in Rome probably met Paul in his travels in Asia and Greece, and had then moved to Rome, and were using their gifts to build the church there.

What do verses 1-4 tell you about Phoebe and Priscilla and Aquila and how they have used their gifts and abilities in the work of the gospel?

(The word 'help' in v2 probably means 'patron' i.e. that as a rich upper class woman, Priscilla provided hospitality and financial aid to Christian workers).

Note the depth of their commitment to the ministry of the gospel - they are ready to risk their lives, use their financial resources and travel to different countries in order to support the ministry of the gospel.

Priscilla and Aquila are mention many times in the New Testament (see Acts 18:1-3, 18-28; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). Read the other passages that tell us about Priscilla and Aquila.

1. How many different places do we find them in? What are they doing in each of these locations?

- *Acts 18: Tent-making in Corinth. Moved with Paul to Ephesus, where they supported the church and taught and mentored Apollos in his ministry.*
- *1 Cor 16: Probably still Ephesus, sending greetings to church in Corinth – they are leading a home church.*
- *2 Tim 4: In Asia (modern Turkey) – probably in Ephesus.*

2. What does this tell you about their attitude to the ministry of the gospel?

Read Romans 16:25-27

What do these verses tell you about God's purpose for all nations?

His concern is that all nations might believe and obey the Lord Jesus.