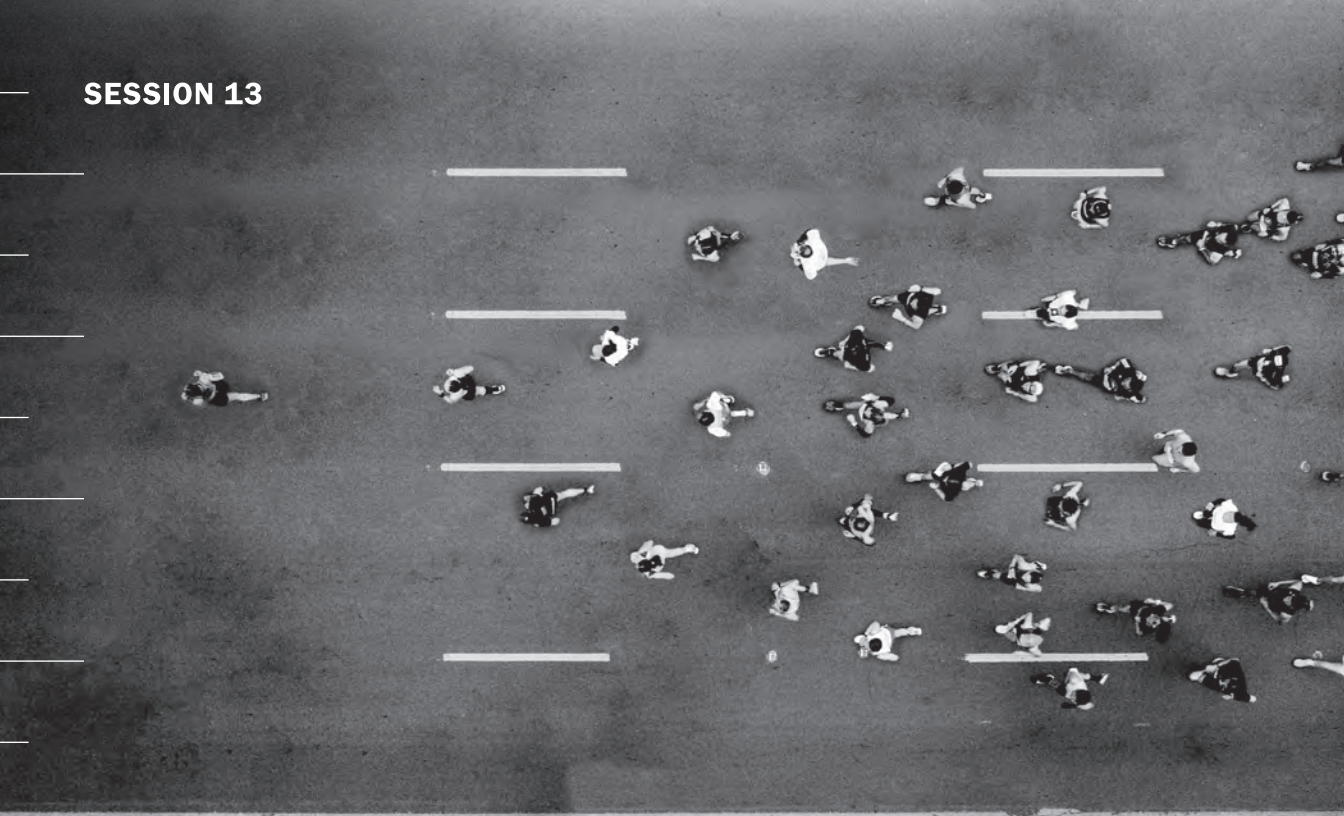




► *Purpose* ◄

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

ROMANS 15:14-21,30-33

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**

ROMANS 15:14–16:27

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).

 **Read Romans 15:14–21, 30–33. What role did God give Paul in relation to the Gentiles? What specific requests did Paul make of the believers in Rome?**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

JOINT MINISTRY (ROM. 15:14-16)

¹⁴ My brothers and sisters, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of goodness, 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 by God ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, serving as a priest of the gospel of God. God’s purpose is that the Gentiles may be an acceptable offering, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

VERSE 14

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.

VERSES 15-16

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*.

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



Identify one believer you could affirm this week for their spiritual growth. What specifically will you say or do?

SPIRIT'S POWER (ROM. 15:17-21)

¹⁷ Therefore I have reason to boast 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, 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. ²⁰ My aim is to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, 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.

VERSES 17-18

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.

***Paul demonstrated his humility in giving
all the credit to Christ.***

VERSE 19

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*. Likewise, his preaching was empowered by the Spirit.

Writing to the Corinthians, he said, “My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not be based on human wisdom but on God’s power” (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

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.

Paul knew that many would respond to the gospel if they were given the opportunity.

VERSES 20-21

Paul’s aim was to ***preach the gospel where Christ has not been named***. Though Paul 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.

 **How does the Holy Spirit help believers faithfully share the gospel with others?**



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?



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.)

FOCUSED PRAYER (ROM. 15:30-33)

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 in prayers to God on my behalf. ³¹ Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, that my ministry to 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.

VERSE 30

Paul told the believers in Rome that he planned to carry the gospel as far as Spain, and he hoped they 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 on 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 based his appeal on the name of Jesus and on the deep and abiding love that the Holy Spirit nourished in the hearts of the believers in Rome.

VERSE 31

Paul understood that traveling to Jerusalem would be dangerous. He knew that **unbelievers** there would try to put a stop to his ministry. Years earlier, he had joined Peter, James, John, and other church leaders in Jerusalem as they sought the Lord's direction about bringing the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 15:1-21). The strong opposition he witnessed then now moved him to ask 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.

Prayer is a way of joining others who are taking the gospel to the unreached people of the world.

VERSE 32

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—always, of course, in alignment with **God's will**. God had guided Paul throughout his missionary journeys, and Paul trusted that God would also direct his path to Rome. He invited the Roman believers to place their trust in God in the same way. Paul 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).

VERSE 33

Paul's three prayer requests in verses 31-32 focused on his ministry in Jerusalem and his anticipated visit to the church in Rome. But he 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.

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

 **How committed are you to praying earnestly for others, especially those serving in difficult places or roles?**

 **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?

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers are to join with others in ministry.
- + Believers can be assured that the Holy Spirit empowers us to share the gospel.
- + Believers need to pray for the spread of the gospel.

 **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.**

 **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?**

 **Memorize Romans 15:30.**

Prayer Needs
