

## The Church at Martinsburg Community Group Guide

“3 Great Reasons to Plant a Church”

Romans 15:14-21

December 14, 2014

### Scripture Passage

*Have a volunteer read Romans 15:14-21.*

“I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written,

‘Those who have never been told of him will see,  
and those who have never heard will understand.’”

### Discussion Questions

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means.*

1. According to Romans 15:14-16, how is church planting an act of worship?
2. Why should every local church be involved in the work of planting churches?
3. What sacrifices must local churches (and you specifically) make in order for disciples to be made and new churches to be planted?
4. How can you partner with *One Sacred Effort* and the IMB to see the gospel go out to the nations and see churches planted around the world?
5. Take time this week to pray for Bliss and Shelby Spillar as they plant Redemption City Church in Frederick, MD.

### 3 GREAT REASONS TO PLANT A CHURCH

Romans 15:14-21

#### 1) WE PLANT CHURCHES AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP.

*[14] I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.*

VERSE 14: This is a healthy church. Heart, Head and Hands were all being engaged.

- Full of goodness: heart
- Filled with all knowledge: head
- Able to instruct one another: hands (When goodness and knowledge come together.)

*[15] But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God*

VERSE 15: Even a church firing on all cylinders needs to be reminded of what God is doing. This is the very grace of God to them.

Paul understands that what he has been doing, what the other apostles have been doing, what this church in Rome has been doing, all comes by God's grace.

*[16] to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

VERSE 16: Paul functions, so to speak, as priest for the gospel, and the offering he presents to God is people who are being saved.

This offering is pleasing to God since it is set apart into the realm of the holy (sanctified) by the Holy Spirit.

#### 2) WE PLANT CHURCHES BECAUSE IT IS STRATEGIC FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL.

*[17] In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. [18] For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed*

VERSE 17-18: Paul in a certain sense actually boasts of his ministry, for in doing so he glorifies not himself but Christ, who has worked through him in his ministry to the Gentiles.

- Philippians 3:7-8: "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ

Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ.”

- Acts 20:24: "I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”
- Galatians 6:14: "May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

I think one of the reasons why Paul boasts is because he realizes (and wants the church to realize) that God is not obligated to make our work fruitful. **The fact that it is, is the absolute and utter grace of God.**

**But what Paul understands is that just because there is no obligation on God’s part to bless the work, we are still called to the work.**

*[18] For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience—by word and deed, [19] by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God—so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ;*

VERSE 18-19: The second reason Paul planted churches was that it was strategic for the advancement of the Gospel.

Why was it strategic?

- Word and Deed: Paul summarizes his entire ministry up to this point by saying that Christ accomplished his work through him by word and deed, that is, both by Paul’s preaching about Christ and by Paul’s actions (lifestyle, with mighty works) that accompanied those
  - Churches are places for the gospel to be proclaimed and for the gospel to be lived
- Signs and Wonders: By the power of signs and wonders refers to the miracles that accompanied Paul’s gospel proclamation throughout his entire ministry. Such miracles gave a “sign” of (or pointed to) the power of God, the divine origin and truth of the gospel, and God’s mercy and love for people.
  - Churches, especially new churches can be a picture of the new creation.
  - We don’t have much to impress people with, all we have is the gospel.

How do we know it was strategic?

- Paul’s wording in verse 19: "I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ"
- How can Paul say that his work has been complete when many still have not heard the gospel in this area?
- It can be seen from the following verses that churches have been planted in key centers, and from there Paul’s coworkers will bring the gospel to outlying areas.

### **3) WE PLANT CHURCHES BECAUSE IT IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY FOR PEOPLE TO MEET, KNOW & SERVE JESUS.**

*[20] and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else's foundation,*

VERSE 20: Paul's aim was to preach the gospel.

- Paul was concerned with building God's Kingdom and not his.
- His calling was not to plant churches where they already existed but new forward operating bases for the mission of God.
- New church planting is the only way that we can be sure we are going to increase the number of believers in a city and one of the best ways to renew the whole Body of Christ.
- In the end, a focus on the Kingdom of God rather than our own personal kingdoms will keep us fixated upon Jesus' call to go and make disciples of all nations.

*[21] but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."*

VERSE 21: these churches were communities leveraged for mission where people could meet, know and experience Jesus.

- They see Christ.
- They know Christ.
- They experience Christ. (they are around people who have seen and know Jesus).

So that, Paul says, is why he's a church planter. He's a church planter because church planting is an act of worship. He's a church planter because church planting is strategic for the advancement of the gospel. And he's a church planter because church planting is an effective way for people to meet, know and experience Jesus.

### **WHERE ARE WE CALLED TO OBEDIENCE IN THIS PASSAGE?**

Look at how Paul ends the chapter (15:30-33):

*[30] I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, [31] that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, [32] so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. [33] May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

1. Strive together.
2. Strive in intercessory prayer.
3. Reflect on God's grace in this place.

- a. We become a place where people who are far from God, who are asking questions, who are doubting, can meet Jesus, they can begin to know Jesus and experience Jesus.
- b. Ask this question, what would it look like for the grace of God to fill this place and how can I join with Him in doing just that? And as the Spirit prompts, obey.

## Prayer

*As you pray with your group, consider praying for the following things:*

- Any personal requests. Pray for the personal requests that may have been shared in your group.
- Pray that God will send workers into the harvest to proclaim the gospel, make disciples, and plant churches (Luke 10:2; Matthew 28:18-20).
- Pray for the unreached people groups all around the world, that Christ will be made known where he is not yet known.

## Weekly Scriptures

*Encourage your group members to consistently read Scripture. The daily Scripture reading plan from the church is be a helpful place to start.*

**Monday:** Luke 10:2

**Tuesday:** Matthew 28:18-20

**Wednesday:** Colossians 4:2-4

**Thursday:** Romans 15:20-21

**Friday:** Matthew 10:16-31

**Saturday:** Ephesians 3:1-13

## Weekly Update

*Remind your group of some of the important things coming up for the church.*

- **One Sacred Effort.** This Advent, the Church at Martinsburg is partnering with more than 50,000 churches to participate in *One Sacred Effort*, a missions funding effort to bring the gospel to the nations. Through *One Sacred Effort*, the International Mission Board will receive its largest portion of their annual funding.

Pray and consider how you can be strategically generous to mobilize and send missionaries all across the world with the gospel. For more information, visit [www.martinsburgchurch.org](http://www.martinsburgchurch.org) or [www.imb.org](http://www.imb.org).

- **Living Sent.** As progress continues to be made over at 50 Monroe, encourage those in your group who may not be a part of Living Sent to jump in and get involved by giving to Living Sent and volunteering! Remind them to visit the Living Sent kiosk on Sunday mornings or to go to [www.martinsburgchurch.org/livingsent](http://www.martinsburgchurch.org/livingsent).

## Follow-up

*Midway through this week, send a follow-up email, text, etc. to your group with some or all of the following:*

- A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.
- Encourage individual members of your group with specific passages of scripture that deal with something they might be experiencing.
- Encourage your group members to praying for the nations, for churches to be planted, and how they can be involved in the work of church planting domestically and internationally.
- A reminder to pray for the requests made during your group time.

## Recommended Reading

*Read the following article(s) for additional help to put the sermon's passage into practice.*

“The Greatest Challenge in the World”<sup>1</sup>

By John Piper

Never, never, never forget that Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all the peoples on this planet — the whole planet (Matthew 28:19–20). This is the greatest challenge in the world.

Let the emphasis fall on “all the peoples” — Greek, *panta ta ethne* (all ethnic groups in the world). Jesus bought men “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). Not some, but every.

The point is not that we can draw sharp boundaries between all the peoples (tribes, languages, nations). The point is that the scope of Jesus' command is wider and amazingly more diverse than we think.

### Remember the Mission

What a wonderful day we live in when we consider the sacrificial, rigorous, extensive research that is being done to help us know the progress of Jesus' mission! Perhaps the most accessible, clear, and thorough accumulation of these facts is at [JoshuaProject.net](http://JoshuaProject.net). I think Jesus would be very pleased if you were familiar with this site for the sake of his name.

They estimate that the total number of people groups in the world is 9,736 if you don't count any group twice for being in different countries (16,067 if you do).

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<sup>1</sup> From *Desiring God*. <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/the-greatest-challenge-in-the-world>

Then they estimate that 4,067 of those 9,736 are unreached (see the definition). This is the challenge of the church globally — the greatest challenge in the world.

In Luke 24:46–47 Jesus said his commission was written in the Old Testament: “It is written that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

In John 17:18 and 20:21 Jesus said his command is a continuation of his own mission to earth — he was the perfect cross-cultural missionary. He bought the redemption. We take it to the world. Without us they don’t have it. “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.” “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

And in Acts 1:8 Jesus said to the disciples that he sent the Holy Spirit specifically for the empowering of this mission. “The Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Your life is too small if it is not connected to this great challenge. Not all Christians are missionaries. But all care about the mission. All are connected. And want to be connected. No Christian should go for months and never think about this greatest of all enterprises.

### **The Challenge and the Greatness**

World missions is greater than any other challenge in the world.

- It is vastly greater than the challenge of stamping out all disease, for the consequences of our failure are infinitely worse than that failure would be.
- It is vastly greater than the challenge of bringing literacy to all the peoples because it includes that (since one goal of discipleship is reading the Bible) and goes beyond it to the infinite results of believing what is read.
- It is vastly greater than the challenge of ending all war, because there are greater and worse hostilities against mankind than come from armed combat.
- It is vastly greater than the challenge of feeding all the hungry of the world because it addresses that and goes beyond it to the hunger that leads to starvation beyond death.

### **Why is it the greatest?**

- It is the greatest challenge in the world because it carries the greatest news in the world: There is salvation from God’s judgment only through faith in Christ’s death and resurrection.

- It is the greatest challenge in the world because it involves the most complex task of embedding the Christian faith authentically in thousands of diverse cultures without diluting the saving message.
- It is the greatest challenge in the world because it will require the greatest sacrifice of any other challenge not only because of the greatest complexity, but also because of the greatest opposition. Jesus promised it. “You will be hated by all nations” (Matthew 24:9).
- It is the greatest challenge in the world because it was given by the greatest person in the world, Jesus Christ.
- It is the greatest challenge in the world because it has the greatest authority behind it, namely “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18).
- It is the greatest challenge in the world because it is backed by the greatest promise in the world: “I — the creator and sustainer and redeemer of all — will be with you to the end of the age.”
- It is the greatest challenge in the world because Jesus has given us supernatural power that comes to its fullest enjoyment when actualized in world missions (Acts 1:8).

Oh, take hold of this! Never let it go. Stay connected to this. Let this be in your prayers without ceasing. Don't drift away from this. Yes, by all means give yourself to many causes. But remember this cause sums them all up, because this cause carries the possibility of all good causes to all the nations.

Love the mission of Jesus. Because you love Jesus. And because you love the lost. Yes you do. You are Christian.