

CHANGE IS GOOD: Building Excitement for Life Transformation

"CHANGE OF PLANS" ROMANS 15:14-16

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes. Romans 12:1 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Giving Away My Life and Giving Away My Faith are practices with more in common than the words they share. Both of them are born out of obedience to Christ's Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:19; both entail making disciples. What's more both practices are evident in Paul's life and the life of the Christians to whom he ministered—especially those in Rome.

In the opening of the closing of his letter to the Romans, the apostle compliments his brothers and sisters for being "full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another" (15:14). Their possession of these virtues implies the demonstration of them in everyday life. Paul could say that his readers were "full of goodness" because he saw that goodness on display in their relationships to one another. He could say that they were "complete in knowledge" because he saw that

We are all in the priestly service of the Gospel of God; we sacrifice our hearts and lives to him and to each other, and all for his glory.

-Donald Grey Barnhouse

knowledge on display in their understanding of Christian doctrine and their practice of the Christian life. He could say that they were "competent to instruct one another" because he saw that competence on display in them doing that very thing. As one writer puts it, "The main idea of our text is that the Roman believers were so interested in each other's spiritual growth that they sought to help, even wounding in love" (Donald Grey Barnhouse, "God's Glory," in *Romans*, 4:82). They were admonishing one another. In other words, they were discipling one another!

Making disciples, that's certainly what Paul was all about. He tells them in verses 15 and 16 that he had written to them "quite boldly," that is in no uncertain terms, about some points of Christian doctrine and some issues related to Christian living not because they were completely ignorant of what he had to say but because that was his job. God gave him the privilege of being a minister of Christ to the Gentiles with the purpose of making disciples of all nations. He was a priest, in a way, preparing an offering to present to God; in his case, Gentiles made acceptable to God by the Holy Spirit were that offering. The apostle and his readers were both Giving Away Their Lives and Giving Away Their Faith because they were both devoted to making disciples.

A Situation for Discussion

Jennifer stood up in your home group and said, "I can understand how ministers and missionaries can make disciples, but how can I do that? I have a husband, two children, and work outside the home. What's more, I have no formal training. I didn't attend seminary, not even a Christian college, and even if I had, I have no time to make disciples. Presumably disciple making takes time, but how would I know since I really don't know what 'make disciples' means."

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Romans 15:14-16

14 I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. 15 I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me 16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Journal your first impressions of the passage.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "I myself" in v. 14.
- * Circle "brothers" in v. 14.
- * Underline "you yourselves" in v. 14.
- * Bracket "full," "complete," and "competent" in v. 14.
- * Circle "goodness," "knowledge," and "instruct" in v. 14.
- * Box "as if" indicating *manner* in v. 15.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 15.
- * Circle "grace" in v. 15.
- * Bracket "priestly duty" in v. 16.
- * Bracket "of God" in v. 16.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 16.
- * Circle "sanctified" in v. 16.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verse 14 makes sense without the words "myself" and "yourselves." So why would Paul use them?
2. Put what "full of goodness" means in your own words.
3. Paul's readers were "complete in knowledge." What did they know?
4. Describe the kind of teaching implied by "competent to instruct one another."
5. What do you infer from Paul's description of the Christians at Rome?
6. What business did Paul have writing "quite boldly" to them?
7. The words "minister," "priestly duty," and "proclaiming" are sacerdotal terms. Explain Paul's use of metaphorical language in verse 16.
8. What was the *purpose* of Paul's ministry?
9. What does an offering have to be to be acceptable to God?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about what you infer from Paul's description of his personal ministry.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

You're talking to a physician about your high cholesterol; your number is 240. He tells you about another 240, Owen Barrett, who was able to reduce his bad cholesterol and increase his good cholesterol through proper diet and increased exercise.

You say, "So you're telling me to eat right and exercise more."

"No," he replies. "All I'm saying is for many people, Owen Barrett in particular, making changes to their lifestyle—eating better, losing weight, and exercising—will be enough to lower their cholesterol." Then he writes you a prescription for Lipitor and tells you to take one tablet daily.

After leaving his office you did two things. First, you judged that what he said about lifestyle changes and Owen Barrett had *significance* for you, and even though he did not tell you to do so, you started eating red meat less and going for a brisk walks more. Second, you judged that his prescribed drug regimen *applied* to you since he wrote you a prescription, and because he told you to do so, you had that prescription filled, and began taking Lipitor daily as he prescribed. Your two responses illustrate the subtle difference between *inferred significance* and *direct application*. Your first response is inferred from the example of Owen Barrett; the second is implied by the doctor's instructions. The difference between the two relevances is their difference in authority.

Passages in the indicative rather than the imperative and passages that are descriptive rather than directive are more likely to have *inferred significance* for us rather than *direct application* to us. Passages that detail Paul's personal experiences as the apostle to the Gentiles or his readers' unique experiences as members of an individual congregation found especially in the opening and closing of his letters are examples of them. Generally, these passages have significance rather than direct application.

Take Romans 15:14-16 for example. This passage is found in the closing of Paul's letter to the Romans (15:14-16:27). "Paul's sustained argument about the nature and implications of the gospel [contained in the body] is at an end. So he returns to where he began [in the opening], speaking of the Roman Christians and of his own ministry and plans (cf. 1:1-15)" (Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 884).

In verse 14 the apostle compliments them for being "full of goodness, complete in knowledge, and competent to instruct one another." *The Message* puts his compliment this way, "Personally, I've been completely satisfied with who you are and what you are doing. You seem to me to be well-motivated and well-instructed, quite capable of guiding and advising one another." They were Christians with spiritual integrity and the ability to disciple one another, and apparently, they were doing just that much to the apostle's delight.

In verse 15 Paul admits that in spite of their widely reported faith and evident spiritual maturity, he had written to them in no uncertain terms about some points of Christian doctrine and some issues related to the Christian life. He claims he did this not because they were ignorant of these things but by way of reminder to recap what they already knew. The apostle wasn't being disingenuous; he was simply being diplomatic. As one writer says, "Certainly the Romans would not be fooled by Paul into thinking that they already knew everything contained in his letter—unless, indeed, they were a collection of the most insightful theologians who ever lived! (888, 89). And why would he do this? Because it was his job; he had been given the privilege of being a minister of Christ to the Gentiles.

In verse 16 he goes on to describe this ministry of his using figurative language. The words "minister," "proclaiming," and "offering" are sacerdotal terms suited to his metaphor in which he is a priest presenting an offering to God and the offering he is presenting is Gentiles made acceptable to God by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. One might say he isn't claiming to be a priest in reality; he just acts like one in his ministry.

How are we to take this passage? It tells us about the Romans and about Paul, but it doesn't direct us to believe or to behave in any particular way. Doesn't that make it irrelevant? Not at all! It's simply one of those passages that has an *inferred significance* rather than a *direct application*. That significance pertains to the way the Romans and Paul were both giving away their lives and giving away their faith by making disciples.

The Message of the Passage

You who are upright, knowledgeable, and able to admonish one another ought to follow the examples of Paul and the Romans by disciplining all people to become an offering acceptable to God.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Give Yourself Some Good Advice Based on the Message of this Passage.**

- **Pick a verse or verses from the passage to memorize or think about this week.**

- **Relate the message of this passage to any of the following:**
 - **Belonging**
 - **Becoming**
 - **going Beyond**

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage.**

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)

Talk about someone who gave his or her life or faith away to you. Tell what that person did and describe its effects on you.

“Change of Plans”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 14 **I myself** In Greek the ordinary personal pronoun has a reflexive meaning when it occurs with the first person pronoun like it does is here [*autos ego*]. It is used this way for emphasis. Cf., "I personally am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you in particular are . . ." (personal paraphrase).
- v. 14 **brothers** The plural [Greek *adelphoi*] can mean "brothers and sisters" (BAGD, s.v., *adelphos*; cf., TNIV, the NET Bible, NLT). "This part of the letter closing (15:14-16:27) "falls into three basic parts, marked by the address 'brothers' in vv. 14 and 30 and the transitional 'therefore' [trans. "this is why" in NIV] in v. 22. In vv. 14-21, Paul alludes to his past travels—from Jerusalem around to Illyricum' (v. 19b)—to explain why he has written to the Roman Christians. His focus shifts to his future travel plans in vv. 22-29. Here Paul tell how he intends to 'pass through' Rome on his way to Spain after delivering the collection to Jerusalem. Verses 30-33 are closely tied to this last matter, as Paul asks the Roman Christians to pray for that visit to Jerusalem" (Moo, 885).
- v. 14 **goodness** "Goodness' translates a rather rare word that can denote general 'uprightness' in conduct or, more specifically, 'kindness' and 'generosity' toward others" (888). "Goodness' (cf. Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; II Thess. 1:11) is that virtue opposed to all that is mean and evil and includes uprightness, kindness, and beneficence of heart and life" (John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 209).
- v. 14 **knowledge** Paul's readers had "a deep and comprehensive grasp of the real principles of Christianity" (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 403). "The 'knowledge' is the understanding of the Christian faith and is particularly related to the capacity for instruction reflected on in the next clause" (Murray, 209). Paul may have used the two terms, "goodness" and "knowledge," in conjunction with one another here "because the two words represent exactly the qualities which are demanded by the discussion in chap.xiv" (Sandy and Headlam, 404). "Goodness is the quality which will constrain the strong to refrain from what will injure the weak and knowledge is the attainment that will correct weakness of faith" (Murray, 209).
- v. 14 **instruct** The term does not mean "lecture in a classroom." It means "to admonish" in a more informal, incidental sense. "The verb means 'to impart understanding,' 'to set right,' 'to lay on the heart.' The stress is on influencing not merely the intellect but the will and disposition. The word thus acquires such senses as 'to admonish,' 'to warn,' 'to remind,' and 'to correct.' It describes a basic means of education. Philo and Clement of Alexandria speak about god or Christ warning, censuring, and encouraging us in this way. The idea is not that of punishment but of a moral appeal that leads to amendment" (TDNT, abridged ed., s.v. *noutheteo*, *nouthesia*). "To teach (Goodspeed 'to instruct') is rendered 'to give advice to' in a number of translations (NEB, NAB, Moffatt; see JB). Paul is not referring to teaching in a formal situation, but in a general sense. He uses this word in a similar way in 1 Corinthians 4.14 (to instruct); Colossians 1.28 (warn); 3:16 (instruct); 1 Thessalonians 5.12 (instruct), 14 (encourage); and 2 Thessalonians 3.15 (warn)" (Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 279).
- v. 15 **grace** Paul did not earn his calling; his ministry was a gift from God. "By this, of course, Paul does not mean that general divine grace that underlies and empowers all of Christian experience. As in 1 Cor. 3:10; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:2, 7, 8, Paul refers to that special gift of God's grace which established him as an apostle; cf. 1:5, 'the grace of being an apostle'" (Moo, 889). The term is translated "privilege" in TEV. "Because of the privilege God has given me is literally "because of the grace which was given me by God" ('grace' is taken in the same sense here that it was in 1.5). Because of the privilege God has given me may also be rendered as 'because God has given me the privilege of being a servant . . .'" (Newman and Nida, 279).
- v. 16 **minister . . . priestly duty** The terms Paul uses to describe his ministry have sacerdotal connotations in line with calling Gentiles "an offering acceptable to God." "When he calls himself a 'minister' of Christ he uses a term which in its various forms is often charged with the sacredness belonging to worship . . . When he defines his ministry as 'ministering the gospel of God' the apostle uses a word occurring nowhere else in the New Testament which may properly be rendered 'acting as a priest'. So the ministry of the gospel is conceived of after the pattern of priestly offering" (Murray, 210). "The language of 'priest' and 'sacrifice' here is, of course, metaphorical; Paul makes no claim to be a 'priest' or to be offering sacrifice in any literal sense" (Moo, 890).
- v. 16 **proclaiming** Cf. "ministering as a priest the gospel of God" (NASB); "in the priestly service of the gospel of God" (ESV).
- v. 16 **an offering** "Paul acts as a priest [figuratively speaking] in presenting to God an offering which consists of ('of the Gentiles' is appositional) the Gentile Christians who have been converted in his missions. This living sacrifice (cf. xii. 1) is acceptable not in virtue of its own intrinsic merit, but because it has been set apart for divine use by the Holy Spirit, given to the converts in their conversion and baptism" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, HNTC, 275).

Connect the **FAMILY**. During this series, Bible stories appropriate for children will be used that complement the adult teaching.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

At dinner this week ask each family member what is the most amazing thing they have ever seen. Did you tell anyone about it? Read John 11: 38-44. Imagine being there that day. How amazing would it have been to see Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead? Would you have wanted to tell everyone what happened?



Pray it!

Pray God's will for your child by praying scriptures. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

Father, help _____
to offer herself as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God as her spiritual act of worship. Ro 12:2

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Giving Away My Life – I give away my life to help with God's work.

Memory verse – "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end." Ecc 3:11

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

Read John 11:38-44

- * Jesus knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. Why was deeply moved?
 - * What do you think the people expected when they took the stone away from the tomb?
 - * Why did Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead?
- (v. 42)

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Draw a picture, on 8 X 10 paper, showing who or what you would like to Become in Jesus as you grow up. Turn it into the Children's Ministry Department by January 31. Your drawings will be displayed in an Art Show at The Connection Open House on February 7.



Challenge

Kids preschool through sixth grade receive a prize for completing a Connect the Family activity.

My family completed at least one Connect the Family activity this week.

Child's name _____ Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.