

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power for Salvation
TITLE: The Purpose-Driven Life
SCRIPTURE: Romans 15:14-33
DATE: November 11, 2018
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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

Back in 2002, Rick Warren wrote a book entitled, *The Purpose-Driven Life*. He began like this: It's not about you. The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born *by* his purpose and *for* his purpose. ...You were made *by* God and *for* God, and until you understand that, life will never make sense. It is only in God that we discover our origin, our identity, our meaning, our purpose, our significance, and our destiny. Every other path leads to a dead end. He says: You were made for God, not vice versa, and life is about letting God use you for *his* purposes, not you using him for your own purpose. As I see it, that's what Romans 15:14-33 is about—What it looks like to live a purpose-driven life.

Now Paul didn't plant or start the church in Rome. He had never been there, but he had heard good things about the church and he very much wanted to visit them. Read 1:8-13 and compare to 15:14-22. What's interesting is that Romans 15:14-33 is Paul's *absence excuse*. Basically, he says the reason he hasn't been able to visit Rome is b/c his purpose has determined his plans. That's his "absence excuse"—*I haven't been able to visit you because my purpose has determined my plans*.

So, what is Paul's purpose? Paul is passionately pursuing life and mission with Jesus. He sees his life as a continuation of Jesus' ministry of connecting people to God by preaching the Gospel of the grace of God. Your purpose in life is also a continuation of Jesus' purpose (cf Lk 19:10 and Matt 28:19-20). God is at work in the world and he wants you to join him in his work. Following Jesus means your life purpose must be in line with God's great purpose of drawing people to himself by living out grace and telling others about God's grace.

Seven things that give shape to who you are. (1) Your personality; (2) Your gift mix; (3) Your relationships; (4) Your work; (5) Your resources; (6) Your arena for service; (7) Your purpose. The first six will be different from other believers, but all believers share a common purpose. The first six will "color"/shape how you live a God's purpose-driven life. A purpose-driven life is a life that is a continuation of Jesus' life. You let Jesus continue to live his life and do his work through you. Your purpose in life is a continuation of Jesus' purpose.

Now in this "absence excuse," Paul moves from his purpose to his plans (Read 14:22-33). Paul's plan was to go to Rome after he had taken an offering to the poverty-stricken Jewish believers in Jerusalem. After Jerusalem, he planned to stop off in Rome and then head on to Spain with their help and support. But

after Romans 15 and before chapter 16, write in Acts 21-28. Paul's plans did not happen like he planned. His prayers were not answered the way he prayed. His plans changed, but his purpose didn't. If you stay focused on God's purpose for your life, when "storms" change your plans, you will stay on course.

Paul's purpose—and *this is our purpose statement here at FG*—Paul's purpose was to *passionately pursue life and mission with Jesus*—to continue and to finish the work Jesus gave him to do. He made plans in line with that purpose and when his plans changed he stayed on course because *his plans took 2nd place to God's purpose for his life*. Here are three things to think on "by way of reminder"

First: Make God's purpose _____ purpose. See your life as a continuation of Jesus' life and work.

Second: Look for where God is working and _____ him there. Remember, you will experience God working in the storms, the detours, the interruptions if you are looking for him.

Third, hold your plans with _____

Discussion —

Have different people read through different paragraphs of the Sermon Summary above and also read the accompanying Scriptures.

From what you heard in Charlie's message or what we just read right here:

1. *What are some of the "AHAs" you had?*
2. *What did you hear that resonated with you?*
3. *What new thoughts and insights did you have?*

When someone volunteers an "AHA" ask follow up questions to dig deeper and to keep the discussion going. Ask the group, *"Anyone else have this same "AHA"? What do you think about this insight?"* After you've exhausted topic, throw the original question back out to the group--"Who else had an "AHA?"

Repeat the pattern above.

If someone says, *"I didn't really have an "AHA," it's more that I don't understand"* Then go that direction. Ask follow-up questions to help them clearly articulate the issue. *"Anybody else think about that/struggle with that?"* Ask the group for input, *"So, how would you answer that question?"* Whoever answers, ask follow up questions, ask for input from the group on that answer (*What do you think about that?*), etc.

It's been my (Charlie) experience that you can have a great discussion around this approach to community group conversations.

Discernment Exercise Questions

1. If another Christian asked you: *What is your purpose in life? ...What would you tell them? ...What has Jesus commissioned you to do? ...Try to explain this in your own words, as simply as possible, rather than just quoting Bible verses.*
2. Think about the six traits listed above that shape your life as the context for you living out God's purpose in your life.. How do those things shape how you live out God's purpose for your life?
3. Who are you actively trying to "connect to God and his grace?" ...Think about family, friends, co-workers you may be praying for and hoping to have conversations with.
4. Who has a story where their plans have changed but their purpose has kept them on course?
5. Think of the last three points above. How can you "by way of reminder" help each other stay on course in these three areas?