

Life Group Questions

June 16th, 2024

Plans Made in Faith – Brody Loewen – **Romans 15:22-33**

Note from Pastor Jonathan

Hey Life Groups,

I hope you're all looking forward to the summer months.

What activities do your Life Groups have in store? Are there picnics, potlucks, or volunteerings?

Also, if you haven't yet, please let Rufina know when your group will wind down for the summer and what your plans are.

Pastor Jonathan Hsieh

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QUESTIONS (Pick any you like.)

1. What stood out to you in the sermon?

Now that you've had time to process the sermon, what points made you think, convicted your heart, or led to asking more questions? Share with the group. Chances are others resonate or can help you process deeper.

2. What can you see about Paul's heart in this passage?

A few things stood out to me.

First, Paul loves the Roman church. He could have just written a letter to teach them stuff, but he **longed for many years** to visit them. He's hoping to **enjoy** his time with them. He isn't some bossy religious authority, but someone who cares.

Second, it's a two-way street. Yes, Paul's ministry benefits them, but Paul wants to receive from them, too. He's hoping to **be refreshed** when he visits. He also asks for them to **pray** with him for his ministry. Paul isn't acting like he's God's gift to the churches. Rather, the church of Rome can be a blessing to Paul, too.

Third, Paul has a heart to serve. In the previous passage, Paul wrote that he didn't visit the Roman church because he was busy planting new churches in other regions. Now that those churches have been planted, he has a chance to visit Rome. But before he does, he must deliver a monetary gift from other churches to the Christians in Jerusalem for famine relief. Even Paul's request for prayer is for the success of his ministry.

3. What kinds of difficulties do you think Paul faced in his travels?

I'm writing this question from Taiwan. It's a 12ish hour flight. Except for the difficulty of traveling with a toddler, it's pretty comfy. We have nice seats, A/C, and food. Paul didn't have any of that!

He had to travel days or weeks on foot because there were no cars. They had no A/C or rest stops with vending machines. He also had to travel on tiny boats that faced rough seas. Paul got shipwrecked THREE times. He had to worry about robbers ambushing him, especially since he was carrying money to give to the Christians in Jerusalem. Paul also never knew if the people in each city he visited would kill him. (2 Corinthians 11:23-33).

4. Why does Paul prioritize delivering donations for the poor Christians in Jerusalem?

Romans 15:22-33

²² This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.

²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷ For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

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.

He wants to visit the Christians in Rome, but he's got something more urgent. Since he's delivering money to famine-stricken Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30), this matter is more time-sensitive. It takes months to travel around to collect money, then months more to get to Jerusalem. People could literally be dying.

5. Why were the Gentiles pleased to contribute money to the Christians in Jerusalem?

Christianity began in Jerusalem and as the church spread, the Gospel did, too. The Gentiles received the Gospel and were grateful because it led to the forgiveness of sins, having a relationship with God, eternal life, and so on. These blessings are infinitely valuable and met their deepest needs. Out of gratitude, they happily shared their material blessings to meet the material needs of the Christians in Jerusalem.

6. How can we also provide material blessings to those who provide spiritual blessings?

We don't give out of compunction, but out of joy and gratitude. We also give to support the efforts of people who are spreading spiritual blessings. These people include staff at Willingdon, leaders like Life Group leaders or Discovery teachers, volunteers who pray, visitation teams, and more. They may be campus ministry volunteers serving our university students, refugee ministry workers, or traveling preachers. What about local and global missionaries? God has provided so many faithful workers who are working hard to spiritually bless.

So how can you support? When possible, you can give financially. Many ministry efforts require fundraising and you can contribute to that. If they're busy or going through a rough patch, you can provide meals (cooked meals, Uber Eats gift cards, etc.) or babysitting. You can also ask them what they need since many ministries need various supplies and support.

7. Why does Paul need prayer to be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea?

Although Paul used to be a star persecutor of Christians, he became persecuted once Jesus turned him around. Throughout Paul's ministry, he's been attacked and persecuted by non-believing Jews and Gentiles. Since Jerusalem is the center of Jewish worship, he knows there will be plenty of people there who want him dead. The only reason he's survived this long is God's supernatural work.

Paul would soon receive a prophecy about his imminent capture (Acts 21:10-14).

8. How can we strive together in our prayers?

We live in a pretty individualistic society. Although we do some things together as Christians, much of what we do is alone. Most of us do our Bible reading and prayer by ourselves, for example. We don't need to all pray for the exact same things, but there should be some overlap. We should be in sync about a few prayer items. As a Life Group, how can you make sure you're on the same page about certain prayer requests or topics?

9. How can we pray for and refresh our modern-day versions of Paul?

Willingdon supports many missionaries who are dedicated to expanding God's kingdom outside of our church walls. Check out the list: <https://willingdon.org/missionaries>. Click on their names to read what they're doing and see how they need prayer. You can also contact them to let them know your Life Group is praying for them!

Another wonderful activity is to invite those missionaries to visit your Life Group. When my wife and I were in John Dyck's group, we got to meet Sandy Ewan (<https://willingdon.org/ministry/itm/sandy-e>) and Ricky and Karen Sanchez (https://willingdon.org/ministry/itm/ricky_karen). It was an amazing time to hear about their ministry,

especially how God brought them there, how He's at work, and what obstacles He's overcome. I guarantee it'll spiritually bless your Life Group and refresh the missionaries.

10. Does anyone in your group feel the same desire to serve as Paul?

As you read through Paul's ministry and see his heart, do you have the same passion as him? Of course, it's not wrong if you don't. Not everyone in the New Testament did what Paul did. If you do have the same heart, please share it with your group. Let them encourage, guide, and pray for you.