

# DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME // WHERE IS YOUR COMFORT ZONE?  
MARCH 14, 2021

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** When have you stepped out of your comfort zone in service for the Lord?

**Key Passage:** *“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—<sup>12</sup> that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine. <sup>13</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. <sup>14</sup> I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.”* (Romans 1:11-15)

Let’s take a closer look at Paul’s words in this text about mutual encouragement, waiting on God, and our obligation to share the Gospel.

## 1. God intends for encouragement to be mutual among Christians.

In v.11, Paul asserts that he has been yearning to get to Rome so he could use his spiritual gifts of evangelism and teaching to build up the believers and win the lost. Through the use of his gifts, he could put strength and courage into them, which is what “encourage” means—to put courage into.

**Discuss:** Who is someone who needs you or perhaps your small group to put courage into them to follow the Lord, stay faithful, have hope, etc.?

**Discuss:** What are some ways we can encourage others (e.g., in person, through texts, hand-written cards, etc.)?

In v.12, Paul mentions that he is also hoping that the Roman Christians will put strength and courage into him to serve the Lord, too.

**Discuss:** Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who is an encourager in your life?

**Discuss:** Share about a time when God used a fellow Christian to encourage you in your walk with Him.

**Discuss:** While it’s true that some people are better than others at providing encouragement, God wants all of His followers to encourage one another. Why do you think God designed the body of Christ (the church) to depend upon one another—to be mutually encouraging?

**Discuss:** Paul specifies that we encourage each other through our faith (v.12). What is it about a Christian's faith that can provide encouragement?

## 2. When God delays an answer, He always has a good reason—waiting time is not wasted time with God.

In v.13, Paul says that circumstances have delayed his trip to Rome: *"I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles."* Of course, as we read about Paul's ministry in Acts, we can see God's hand in arranging the perfect time for Paul's trip to Rome. It wasn't according to Paul's timing, but according to God's perfect timing!

Lamentations 3:25 says, *"The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him."*

**Discuss:** Why doesn't God always answer our prayers immediately—what are some reasons why God may make us wait for an answer?

**Discuss:** What is the hardest part for you about waiting on the Lord?

**Discuss:** It has been said that God's delays are not God's denials. When has God made you wait, and then later you could see His hand at work in the delay?

**Discuss:** See Lamentations 3:25 (above). In what ways does God show His goodness to those who wait on Him?

## 3. Paul felt he was obligated to take the Gospel to both Jews and Greeks—that's why he so badly wanted to go to the strategic, bustling, diverse metropolis of Rome.

Paul was Jewish, but he was also a Roman citizen, a product of Roman culture and education. Thus, he felt under obligation to reach both groups of people: *"I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. <sup>15</sup> So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome."* (v.14-15)

**Discuss:** An obligation is a sense of duty or calling. In what sense should we all feel an obligation—a sense of duty or calling—to take the Gospel to the world?

**Discuss:** In what ways are you carrying out your calling to share the Gospel with others?

### **For Further Study**

"4 Ways to Encourage Your Friends" article at [www.wordoflife.edu](http://www.wordoflife.edu)

*Waiting on God: Strength for Today and Hope for Tomorrow* by Charles Stanley

"How to Share the Gospel: "The 3 Circles" Resources at [www.lifeonmissionbook.com](http://www.lifeonmissionbook.com)