

SERMON NOTES:

QUESTIONS:

1. Who has used their strength to build you up during a difficult season? What did they do that helped you, and have you ever told them what it meant to you?
2. What kind of help do you appreciate most: practical help, emotional support, spiritual encouragement, financial support, advice, or someone's presence? Which kind is easiest for you to receive? Which is hardest?

3. Read Romans 15:1–3. Paul teaches a theology of power: the strong use their power to serve the weak.
 - a. What kinds of strength, influence, resources, knowledge, or ability has God given you?
 - b. How do you tend to use those things to make life easier or better for yourself?
 - c. Who around you does not have access to the same strength or resources? What would it look like to use what God has given you to serve and build them up?
4. Read Romans 15:4. Paul reads the stories of the Old Testament as examples of this same pattern: people bear the failures and sin of others, choose obedience over serving themselves, endure hardship, and experience God’s faithfulness in ways that give us encouragement and hope for our own circumstances. Is there a story in the Bible that has been encouraging you lately?

CASE STUDY

You notice that a friend seems discouraged and is following Jesus without much joy. You two go on a walk together, and you ask them about it.

Your friend responds, “Is following Jesus about enjoying ourselves? Life has its ups and downs. People in the world live it up, chase pleasure, and take advantage of one another to do it. That’s the opposite of what the Bible says we should do. I was reading Romans 15 the other day, and Paul says that the strong should serve the weak and that Jesus didn’t please Himself. So I don’t think we’re supposed to enjoy life. I think life is about serving people—and sure, it’s hard. People are unkind, but we bear up under that hurt. I’ll have heaven to enjoy forever, so it’s okay if I don’t enjoy things now.”

What would you say to your friend? How would you help them better understand Romans 15?